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iconography of viṣṇu

Kalpana Desai

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TO

DR. MOTI CHANDRA

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ICONOGRAPHY OF VIṢṆU

(In Northern India, Upto The Mediaeval Period)

KALPANA S. DESAI

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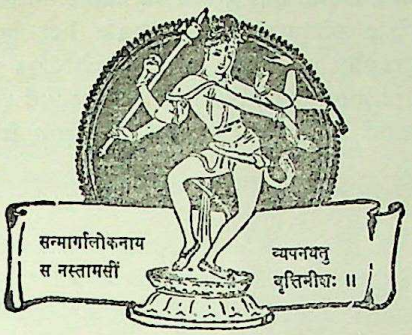

FOREWORD

The concept of Viṣṇu and the ramifications of the iconographic forms of this deity constitute one of the noblest themes in the realm of Indian images. Literature teems with references to forms of Viṣṇu in their variety. The development of the concept during the millennia right from the time of the Vedic hymns to the time of later-day Śilpa texts presents a large and colourful picture of the deity in different forms to which the sculptor and painter from the earliest times have added their visual interpretation in different media creating sometimes their own interpretation of ideas recording concepts for which texts do not necessarily supply a literary picture, meticulously sometimes conforming to contemplative hymns and helping understanding of the texts better where they exist. Besides the Vedic roots of some of the concepts, general literature also, apart from the Epics and Purāṇas, has supplied a stream of ever growing and flowing concepts. Though in *tredhā nidadhe padam,* there is the Vedic concept of Trivikrama, Trivikrama as known to later iconographic form, with or without the raised foot, in which his strides are emphasised, has his disposition of the attributes alone to determine the iconographic form. It is the Saṁkarṣaṇa Vāsudeva concept however that has the earliest representation in sculpture and description in inscriptions mentioning temples, dedication of the deity and so forth. Viṣṇu, though invariably a deity wearing *kirīṭa* in later examples, is in his earliest form as Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva crowned only by a turban, in common with other deities, including Indra, who, though *kirīṭī* from the beginning of the Christian era, is yet an *uṣṇīṣī* in the 2nd century B.C.

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It is very happy accomplishment of Dr. Kalpana Desai to have written an exceedingly well thought out book on the Iconography of Viṣṇu confining herself to only north Indian representations. Considering the vast scope of the subject, it can easily have two distinct volumes, one for the northern varieties and another for the southern ones. She has gathered very valuable material, epigraphical and archaeological, Vedic, Āgamaic and iconographic from the Epics and Purāṇas in addition to various valuable books and papers on iconography by different scholars on which she has freely drawn, discussed, interpreted and given her conclusions in a lucid and expressive way. Dr. Kalpana Desai has given valuable notes under each chapter and has chosen most appropriate pictures to illustrate her book. This is a valuable contribution to the iconography of Viṣṇu which scholars should welcome wholeheartedly. I hope that before long she would give a second volume equally instructive and informative on the fecund variety of images of Viṣṇu from the Deccan and the South.

C. Sivaramamurti

National Museum
New Delhi
30th August, 1973

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PREFACE

Several stray articles on some Viṣṇu images have been published but there prevailed a lacuna as far as a comprehensive work on the origin and evolution of the iconography of Viṣṇu. The scope has been restricted to the Northern India to make the detailed account possible. It is hoped the complementary South Indian volume on Viṣṇu iconography will be prepared in the near future.

Though work demands the description of many Viṣṇu images, it is not at all intended to catalogue the available images of Viṣṇu, the purpose being to present the iconographic evolution of Viṣṇu and his different forms.

The origin of all the Indian cult gods is shrouded in dark. An attempt has been made to trace the conceptual origin of these deities from the earliest literature. Many of the forms of Viṣṇu have an independent existence initially and later on they get merged with the cult of Viṣṇu.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Moti Chandra, whose invaluable guidance has opened a new horizon for me in understanding of Indian art. My thanks are also due to the trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum for awarding me the research scholarship to prepare this thesis for two years and also to Lady Ratan Tata Trust for giving me a lump sum grant to finish my work.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. C. Sivaramamurti, Director, National Museum, for contributing a foreword to this book, and for his kind words of appreciation.

My hearty thanks to : Dr. U.P. Shah for his help throughout the preparation of this work ; Dr. B.N. Sharma for the keen interest he has shown in the publication of this book ; Fr. A. Esteller for reading through the manuscript ; the Asst. Curators and the Librarian of the Prince of Wales Museum for their kind cooperation ; and the authorities of the museums concerned for allowing me to publish the photographs of the images illustrated here.

In the end I will not forget my hearty thanks to Shri Anand Prakash Singhal of Anand Printing Press, Delhi-7 for his kind cooperation and quick printing of this book.

Kalpana S. Desai

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

अ	a	क्	k	ड़्	ḍ	य्	y
आ	ā	ख्	kh	ढ़्	ḍh	र्	r
इ	i	ग्	g	ण्	ṇ	ल्	l
ई	ī	घ्	gh	त्	t	व्	v
उ	u	ङ्	ṅ	थ्	th	श्	ś
ऊ	ū			द्	d	ष्	ṣ
ऋ	ṛ	च्	c	ध्	dh	स्	s
ए	e	छ्	ch	न्	n	ह्	h
ऐ	ai	ज्	j	प्	p	क्ष्	kṣ
ओ	o	झ्	jh	फ्	ph		
औ	au	ञ्	ñ	ब्	b		
अं	ṁ	ट्	ṭ	भ्	bh		
अः	aḥ	ठ्	ṭh	म्	m		

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Photographs courtesy :

Figs. 4, 8, 12, 15, 17-28, 32, 35, 36, 39-42, 48-50, 52-53, 54, 56-57, 59, 61, 63, 66-68, 70, 71, 73, 75, 76—Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.

Figs. 6, 9, 11, 16, 33, 37, 38, 45, 74, 77-84, 86-89, 93, 96, 97, 100-104—Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

Figs. 1-3, 13, 31, 58, 99 Mathura Museum

Figs. 30, 62, 72, 95, 98—Lucknow Museum.

Figs. 55, 69, 94—Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras.

Figs. 34, 44, 47--Dr. B.N. Sharma.

Figs. 14, 64, 85—Bansi Mehta.

Figs. 5, 29, 43, 60, 92—Dr. U.P. Shah.

Fig. 50—National Museum.

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INTRODUCTION—The origin of Viṣṇu worship and Viṣṇu images

The religion which was widely known as Viṣṇuism in the mediaeval period had a long history of evolution before it attained its final state. Various petty cults and thought processes had contributed to it and their synthesis finally brought into existence a religious system which was destined to play a very important role in the religious life of the whole nation.

A deity named Viṣṇu does figure in the hymns of the *Rig-Veda*, but does not occupy a very significant and important position in the mythology of the Vedas. The most important task of Viṣṇu, referred to in the *Rig-Veda*, is to take three strides, traversing the earth—the terrestrial spaces—a feat well reflected in his epithets *urukrama, vikrama and urugāya,* wide-going and wide-traversing. This feature has aptly led the scholars like Macdonell,[1] Keith[2] and others[3] to ascribe him the solar origin. Viṣṇu also represents a fertility god and a vegetation god as expounded by Gonda.[4] In the *Brāhmaṇas* the position of Viṣṇu gradually ascends to a higher status. He is often indentified with the sacrifice round which the Brahmanic literature centres. He is also identified with Āditya or Agni,[5] thus retaining his solar character. In spite of his ascending position there is hardly any indication to conclude that a cult may have been already formed round the worship of Viṣṇu. It is true that the whole religion derives its name from the god Viṣṇu, but that is only a later development. Besides his connection with several gods in the *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, the most

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important phase in the evolution of this religion is his identification with Vāsudeva in the *Mahābhārata*—an assimilation with a cult that centred round *bhakti* or devotion.

The Vāsudeva worship was differently designated as Bhāgavata, Sāttvata, Ekāntika or Pāñcarātra. The earliest treatise propounding this religion is the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mahābhārata*. The section is designated after the principal deity Nārāyaṇa who is glorified throughout the *Mahābhārata*. He is addressed as 'older than the oldest one' thus assigning him the highest position.[6] He is also considered to be the soul of the universe, the only one who existed before creation.[7] He is conceived as having his abode in the primaeval waters as the etymological explanation of his name suggests.[8] It must be remembered here in passing that this concept of Nārāyaṇa is initially responsible for the evolution of the Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyī form, where he is represented as the Creator, reclining on the serpent symbolising eternity, amidst the primaeval waters.

Nārāyaṇa took birth as the progeny of *Dharma* in a quadruple form—as Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. Out of these Nara and Nārāyaṇa practised severe austerities at their āśrama at Badari. Nara and Nārāyaṇa are supposed to have taken their birth for the destruction of evils and redemption of man.[9] They are highly glorified in some parts of the *Mahābhārata*.[10]

It seems that in that period the worship of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, who were at times identified with Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, must have been widely prevalent but was later on overshadowed by the more expanding cult of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. Nārāyaṇa is still being worshipped at Badari, mentioned as their *āśrama* in the *Mahābhārata*, which is supposed to be the earliest existing shrine of Viṣṇu.

Nārāyaṇa in his original form dwells at Śvetadvīpa where Nārada approached him. He reveals himself to Nārada in his multiple forms and propounds the theory of *ekānta bhakti*.[11] He identifies himself with Vāsudeva and says that Vāsudeva is the one who is omnipresent and those who worship him with a single-minded devotion or *ekānta-bhakti* attain to him.[12] The same idea is stated in another way that Ekāntins are very dear to Lord Hari, thereby suggesting that this cult of Vāsudeva, with Bhakti as its main precept, was known as the *ekānta dharma*.[13] This verse also assures that Bhagavān accepts the *pūjā* or the worship of a devotee who performs it in accordance with the established *vidhi* or ritual. It is noteworthy that the cult of Ekāntins had already some *vidhi* or ritual established for the worship of their god as early as the *Mahābhārata* (in those literary layers). The fact is also corroborated by the Mora inscription found from Mathura, cited below.

This religion was also known as *Pāñcarātra* and has a clear connection with the Sāṅkhya-yoga system and also the principles of the *Āraṇyakas*.[14] The main precepts of this religion as propounded here, are the devotion to Bhagavān, following the path of *ahiṁsā*, and remaining pure and *sāttvika*. These principles are very elabo-

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rately discussed in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. This particular religion of Bhakti, which is very difficult to know and to follow, was always accepted by the Sāttvatas.[15] The whole chapter concludes with the statement that this is especially the religion of the Sāttvatas.[16]

It is clear from the *Mahābhārata* itself that Vāsudeva, the chief god of the Ekāntins, was a hero of the Vṛṣṇī race. He must have been deified later on and was worshipped together with his brother and sons, forming originally a group of five. Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa is several times glorified as a Vṛṣṇī hero.[17] He is at times addressed as Vṛṣṇī-Śārdūla,[18] Vṛṣṇī-śreṣṭha[19] etc. Vṛṣṇī-vīrau, in dual, is also used for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.[20] In the list of the enumeration of the Vṛṣṇīs who attended the marriage of Draupadī, the first four Vṛṣṇīs mentioned are—Saṁkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Raukmiṇeya (Pradyumna), and Sāmba.[21] Aniruddha, the son of Pradyumna, is not mentioned here, but elsewhere he is acknowledged as his son.[22]

Thus at the root of the formation of the cult is the practice of hero worship. Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Aniruddha, Pradyumna and Sāmba were heroes of the Vṛṣṇī race, later on deified and incorporated in the cosmological speculations of the Sāṅkhya system, which must have been one of the most prominent philosophical systems of the period. The principal heroes of the cult were identified with the first four creative principles of the Sāṅkhya system—*parama, mahat or jīva, manas* and *ahaṁkāra*. Vāsudeva is the highest *nirguṇātmaka*, from him emanates Saṁkarṣaṇa in the form of *jīva* or individual soul, from him emanates Pradyumna in the form of *manas* and lastly comes Aniruddha identified as *ahaṁkāra*.[23] To put in the reverse order, when the senses are immolated by the sun, they enter Aniruddha, then transformed into *manas* they enter Pradyumna, again transformed into *jīva* they enter Saṁkarṣaṇa and ultimately when they reach the highest state, they merge with Vāsudeva.[24] It is noteworthy that Sāmba is left out from the *vyūha* theory though formerly five Vṛṣṇī heroes were worshipped, as is clear from the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*,[25] *Viṣṇudharmottaram*[26] as well as *Vaikhānasāgama*.[27] It seems that his importance was reduced later on and was gradually lost into oblivion. From this *caturvyūha*, which gave rise to the iconographic form of Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti, known in the *Mahābhārata* itself as the *mūrti-catuṣṭaya*,[28] evolves the world.

The number of *Vyūhas* varied in the beginning as reflected in a verse in the *Mahābhārata*. It clearly says that *ekavyūha, dvivyūha, trivyūha* and sometimes *caturvyūha* are also known.[29] Ultimately the *caturvyūha* was accepted and established as a dictum.

Another concept that contributed to the evolution of the cult was the theory of incarnation or *Vibhāva*. In fact we may say that even the deification of the Vṛṣṇī heroes, to form the whole cult, reflects this concept. The theory of incarnation is known right from the time of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.[30] There Prajāpati is conceived of as a god assuming different incarnations for the redemption of the world in one way or the other. Prajāpati is supposed to have taken the Fish, the Tortoise and the

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Boar incarnations. Later on these were attributed to Viṣṇu. In the *Bhagavad Gītā* itself, Lord Kṛṣṇa assures Arjuna that he assumes incarnations whenever there is need for it.

These, in short, are the theories of *Vyūha* and *Vibhāva*,[31] round which the whole pattern of various iconographic forms evolved. With the increasing popularity of incarnations, the *Vyūha* concept recedes more into the background.

It is clear from this account that the early Bhāgavata religion incorporated the worship of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa or the Pañcavīras. The proposition has been justified by a number of literary and archaeological evidences. The most interesting of all is the Mora well inscription which stands as a solid testimonial for the prevalence of the worship of the images of the five Vīras, installed in a temple, as early as the 1st century B.C.[32] Though the inscription is much defaced, enough is deciphered to indicate that it records the setting up of the five images of the Holy Pañcavīras of the Vṛṣṇīs, in a stone temple. The word *arcādeśa* specifically signifies a shrine dedicated to the adoration of these Pañcavīras. Although the entire temple has been ruined, Vogel[33] has found two torsos of standing male figures. Both of them are very much alike, carved in the round, wearing a *dhotī* with the waist girdle. These are supposed to be the Vṛṣṇīvīras, to whom the shrine was dedicated.[34] The shrine is supposed to have been built by Toshā, a foreign, possibly a Greek lady, who must have been converted to the Bhāgavata sect.

Another inscription of the time of the king Śoḍāsa, datable to the 1st century B.C., has come to light from a door-jamb at Mathura.[35] The inscription clearly refers to the *Mahāsthāna* or a great temple of Vāsudeva containing the *Vedikā, toraṇa,* etc. This inscription is of "exceptional importance" in the opinion of Dr. V.S. Agrawal for it mentions king Vasu who according to the *Nārāyaṇīya parvan* was the supreme patron of the Nārāyaṇī and the Sāttavata *dharma*.[36]

The Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa worship was not only prevalent in Mathura, the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa himself, but also in other regions. A village named Ghosundi in the Chitorgarh district, Rajasthan, has preserved the famous Ghosundi stone inscription datable to the 2nd century B.C.[37] The inscription again records the temple dedicated to Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, which had a *Pūjā-śilā-prākāra, i.e.* a shrine, having a railing round it. The term 'Nārāyaṇavaṭikā' is significant, as it signifies the temple of Nārāyaṇa together with the compound wall. The *vāṭikā* must have been really a huge shrine, installed for Nārāyaṇa as early as the 2nd century B.C. Another inscription from Nagari[38] in the Udaipur district, contains the same text as the Ghosundi well inscription. The king who constructed the *pūjā-śilā-prākāra* for Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva in Nārāyaṇa-*vāṭikā* was Gajāyana, *Parāśarī-putra Sarvatāta,* who is supposed to have ruled in the first century B.C.

The Besnagar Garuḍa pillar inscription at Vidisa records the memorial Garuḍa-dhvaja, set up in honour of Vāsudeva by Heliodorus, son of Dion, who must have

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ruled in the 2nd century B.C. The fact that he calls himself a Bhāgavata suggests his conversion to the Bhāgavata faith, and it is a good document of the prevalence of the Bhāgavata cult.[39] Its discovery has again brought to light the possibility of a number of such other pillars installed in honour of Viṣṇu. The Nanaghat cave inscription of Nāganikā also corroborates the fact that the Saṁkarṣaṇa-Vāsudeva worship was strongly prevalent in India a couple of centuries before the Christian era.[40] To go still further, in the 3rd century B.C., Aśokan edicts, especially No. 12, command the people to pay due respect to the other religions. In the opinion of Dr. Banerjea, the conclusion that the Bhāgavata cult also existed in the time of Aśoka, may not be far-fetched.[41]

It may be noted here in brief that in the early inscriptions, as also in the verse of the *Mahābhārata* cited above, Saṁkarṣaṇa is mentioned prior to Vāsudeva, and only later on Vāsudeva gains prime importance, even though he is the younger one of the two.

The literary evidences also corroborate the prevalence of the Vāsudeva worship, before the beginning of the the Christian era. Curtius informs us that the soldiers of king Puru (Porus) carried the image of Heracles and installed it in front of the river Vitastā. This Heracles refers to the image of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa according to some scholars.[42] The people around Vitastā were worshippers of Vāsudeva as indicated by Ptolemy.[43] Megasthenes, in his *Indica*, refers to a class of people who specially worshipped god Heracles. Their cities, known as Mothora and Klisobora, were watered by the river Jobanes. This clearly indicates the cities of Mathura and Kṛṣṇapura, which may be present Gokula, and the river is the Yamuna.

Pāṇinī refers to the Bhakti[44] cult and also to Vāsudeva worship in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. In the Buddhist literature also we find some references to this cult. For instance the 1st *Niddeśa* of the *Suttanipāta* mentions the cult of Vāsudeva and Balarāma. Many other literary evidences are also known.[45]

The numismatic evidence also goes to prove the prevalence of Viṣṇu worship in or before the 2nd century B.C. The coins of the Mitra kings always bear the figure of the deity after whom they are named, for instance, the coins of Agnimitra bear the image of Agni. Similarly, the coins of Viṣṇumitra also bear a seated and possibly four armed figure of a god who may well be identified as Viṣṇu.[46]

The human efforts to comprehend that which is incomprehensible and to shape in a form that which is formless resulted in the evolution of idol worship, and, keeping pace with the general trend, the adherents of the Bhāgavata sect began to symbolize their God through various forms and emblems. The five heroes were deified and identified with the Supreme Being Nārāyaṇa or all-pervading Viṣṇu and were ultimately worshipped in human form in stone.

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This process must have been contemporary with the Buddhists. The early images of Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva are very similar to the images of *Yakṣas* of the Buddhist pantheon. But there is a marked difference in the images so far as the iconography of the figure is concerned. The Bhāgavatas preferred to symbolize the irconcepts of God through certain emblems, which must have been widely known to the people. Besides these emblems there were a number of auspicious symbols, traditionally forming a part of their religious thought, which were accepted by all the existing sects—may it be Buddhism, Jainism or Brahmanism. Some of the very prominent symbols were the lotus, the flower garland, the *śrīvatsa*, the *pūrṇaghaṭa*, etc. The *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* lists a hundred and eight such auspicious symbols.[47]

The usual emblems, associated with Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu are the conch, the disc, the mace, the lotus, the *abhaya* or the *varada-mudrā*. The conchshell, being a precious object in itself, is considered to be a *nidhi* or a treasure, signifying prosperity, in the *Mahābhārata*.[48] The disc, a symbol of universality and power, is also prominently adopted in Buddhism. So also the lotus, a mark of divine purity. The mace, a very prominent weapon signifying strength, was also attributed to him. Of all the instruments, the mace must have been one of the strongest. Its importance is indicated by the fact that a whole section of the *Mahābhārata*, describing the fight with this weapon, is designated after it. The *abhaya*—and the *varada-mudrās* would naturally find their place in the iconography of a beneficent god, like Viṣṇu. The emblems attributed to Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are also instruments or weapons of common use, *e.g.*, the pestle, the bow, the sword, the ploughshare, etc.

In the later texts a very high symbolic significance is attached to these emblems and varied interpretations were given by the authors.[49]

Besides the emblems some of the local cults also go to add to the iconography of Viṣṇu. For instance, the *Nāga* cult which was prevailing in the beginning of the Christian era, has left an undeniable influence on the iconography of Śeṣa Nārāyaṇa or Balarāma. So also the Suparṇa cult has contributed to the iconography of Viṣṇu by acquiring the position of his mount in the form of Garuḍa.[50] Garuḍa is referred to as the vehicle and emblem on the flagstaff of Viṣṇu.[51] He is assigned so high a position that all the gods in the *Mahābhārata* address a prayer to him.[52]

As he is considered to be all pervading supreme deity, he is conceived to have been endowed with four hands, the additional pair of hands elevating him to a super-human level.

The *Viṣṇudharmottaram* gives a detailed description of the images of the four *vīras*.[53] Vāsudeva has one face and four hands, his complexion is like that of a cloud laden with water, and is adorned with ornaments. The earth goddess is to be carved between his feet. The *vanamālā* and the *yajñopavīta* are to be carved on the figure. One of his right hands holds the full blown lotus and a left one holds the conch. To his right is standing the mace, personified as a woman, under the right hand

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of Vāsudeva. She holds a *caurī* in her hand. To the left of the god should be carved the disc, in a personified form with a big belly, under the left hand of Vāsudeva. Saṁkarṣaṇa should be carved exactly like Vāsudeva, but instead of the mace he holds the pestle and in place of the disc he holds the ploughshare. Pradyumna is also like Vāsudeva, holding the bow in place of the disc and the arrow in place of the mace. Aniruddha holds the hide and the sword. Behind them are placed their respective banners. Their attendants are also described here.

The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* also gives the description of the *vīras*, but includes Sāmba in the list and omits Aniruddha. Sāmba[54] holds the mace in his hand, the rest of the symbols being the same as described above.

Excepting the probable identification of the torsos from the Mora inscription, we have not[55] come across any such representation of the four or five *vīras*. As Vāsudeva predominated and overshadowed them soon, even the earliest images mostly represent Vāsudeva. Saṁkarṣaṇa or Balarāma, who is dealt with in another chapter, is also seen at times. The other two are totally absent.

Vāsudeva, widely known as Viṣṇu, was the most dominating god, who continued to exist and evolve in the later period. A number of images of him have been found right from the time of the Kushanas.

According to the north Indian texts the images of Viṣṇu can be classified into standing, sitting and reclining types, their further classification depending on the number of hands.[56]

Standing Images of Viṣṇu :

I

In all probability the earlier Viṣṇu images were two-handed as the early texts have described him with two hands only. The earliest reference is in the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* where Nārāyaṇa is described as holding the disc and the mace only, implying thereby the possession of only two hands.[57] The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* also refers to the two-handed variety together with the multiple-handed ones. If the god is two-handed the right hand should be in *abhaya-mudrā* and the left one should be holding the conch.[58] The *Viṣṇudharmottaram*[59] also describes the type similar to that of the *Ādiparvan*. The *Matsya Purāṇa*[60] and the *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*[61] also suggest that the image of Viṣṇu could be two-handed.

The Viṣṇu worship having sustained throughout the centuries, innumerable images have come to light. It is not possible, nor desirable to discuss all of them and therefore only some images representing different types are taken into consideration.

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The early four-handed images of Viṣṇu date back to as early as the Kushana period, some of which are preserved in the Mathura Museum.[62] All these images, about half a dozen in number, are very similar on iconographic as well as stylistic grounds. The two upper hands arising from the main arms, below the shoulders, are raised upto the head of the figure and are generally attached to the panel providing the support to the image. The modelling of the figure is roundish, with a short bust and a few ornaments. The tiara and the drapery (consisting of a *dhotī* and the waist girdle) remind one of the early Yakṣa images. Sometimes the tiara is replaced by a high crown but simple in its execution. The latter is present in the Gupta period—a little more decorated. The disc held by the god is big and prominent and its spokes give an impression of lotus petals. The mace is very simple and looks like a round top-heavy rod. The two upper hands hold the mace and the disc to the right and to the left respectively, lifting them up above the shoulders. The front or the lower raised right hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā*, and the lower left hand holding the conch, which looks very much like the *amṛtaghaṭa*,[63] is akimbo. The *vanamālā* is generally present (Figs. 1, 2, 3).

These are the common iconographic features of the early images of Viṣṇu. It may be noted here in brief that the high foliated *mukuṭa*, the folds of the *dhotī* and a scarf tied round the waist as a girdle, the right hand in the *abhaya-mudrā* and the left arm akimbo, and the representation of the conch shaped like a nectar flask—all these features have a close affinity with the early Bodhisattva images, and this has led some scholars to suggest that the Viṣṇu image gradually evolved from the Bodhisattva image.[64]

A haloed image from Uchandi in the Allahabad Museum, also provides a good example of the early Viṣṇu image. The lower right hand is in the *varada-mudrā* and the lower left holds the conch. The upper right hand is missing, while the upper left is placed on the head of the Cakra Puruṣa standing below. A very noteworthy feature is the introduction of *āyudha puruṣa* in this image. This figure is adorned with *vanamālā* hanging from the shoulders down to the knees (Fig. 4).

Another stylistically similar image comes from Jhusi and is also in the Allahabad Museum. The emblems are not represented in their personified forms as in the image from Uchandi, but the upper right hand rests on the mace. The upper left hand is placed on the disc which rests on a small base. Both these images, datable to the 4th century A.D., hold the conch in a very peculiar way inserting the fingers inside the conch.

Similar images have come to light from western India as well. A bust of Viṣṇu from Bhinmal, with the lower right hand in the *varada-mudrā*, the upper right holding the mace, the upper left holding a broken disc and the lower left holding the conch, is clad in the *dhotī* and scarf tied round the waist (Fig. 5).

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The Sanchi Museum has a similar unpublished image belonging to the early Gupta period. The upper two hands of the image are missing. The *āyudha puruṣas* flank the main image.

Some of the most elegant Viṣṇu images come from the Gupta period. An image of Viṣṇu of artistic quality is in the collection of the Lucknow Museum (No. H 111). It has a benign expression on the face and is delicately ornamented. The image is much mutilated, preserving only the beautiful bust.

Some of the images of Viṣṇu have survived in the Gupta caves at Udayagiri. The image in cave No. 6 represents Viṣṇu with a high coronet, the necklace and *vanamālā*. The two natural hands are partly mutilated but it seems that the right hand was in the *varada-mudrā* and the left held the conch. The upper right hand is supported on the end of the mace bearing a fine female figure on its end, evidently representing the Gadā Devī. Likewise the upper left is placed on a big discus, encircling the head of the Cakra Puruṣa.[65]

Another image in the same cave is very similar to the one described above showing the same iconography. The only difference is that the mace and the disc are not represented in their personified forms.

From Lakhamandala in the Dehra Dun district a few images of Viṣṇu have been found. One of them is a haloed standing figure, rather crude in workmanship but important from the iconographical point of view. The lower right hand holds the lotus, the upper right hand is placed on the disc, the lower left hand holds the conch and the upper left rests on the mace. The order of the emblems held by the hands is slightly different from the other images described above.

Unfortunately though many of the Gupta pieces are mutilated, some of them excel in their artistic perfection. The ornamentation, mainly consisting of the *mukuṭa*, the bracelets, the earrings and the necklace, is very delicate. The disc and the mace are almost identical in their representation to those in the early images. The disc is at times too big in the early images, and looks like a wheel, especially when the god is supporting his hand on it. The conch is represented as an actual conch now, rather than in the form of a nectar flask.

The majority of the Viṣṇu images of the Gupta period have their lower right hand in the *abhaya-mudrā*, the upper right holds or rests on the mace, the upper left rests on the disc and the lower left holds the conch.

The prevalence of Viṣṇuism is amply reflected in the epigraphical as well as the literary sources. An inscription refers to a temple of Viṣṇu erected by Cakrapālita, the son of a viceroy of Skandagupta at Kathiawad in 456 A.D.[66] At Eran in the Sagar district, an inscription has been found dated 483 A.D.,[67] where Mātṛviṣṇu and Dhanyaviṣṇu are said to have erected a flagstaff in honour of Janārdana. A

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copper-plate inscription of 495 A.D. from Khoh, records that the viceroy Jayanātha announced the grant of a village for the restoration of a temple of Bhagavān or Viṣṇu.[68] An iron pillar inscription near the Kuṭb Minar, datable to the 5th century, identifies that pillar as the flagstaff of Viṣṇu.[69] The Cakravikrama coins of Vikramāditya also testify to the same fact.[70]

Besides, a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu existed at Sirpur in the Raipur district, M.P., datable to about the 8th century A.D.[71] At Osian also a temple of Viṣṇu was erected in the 9th century.

The Dohad inscription declares that the chief appointed by Jayasiṁha at Dadhipadra (modern Dohad), built a temple of Goga Nārāyaṇa.[72]

The *Rājatarañgiṇī* refers to a temple of Viṣṇu built by king Pravarasena.[73] The same text also mentions that king Candrāpīḍa and Lalitāditya built many temples of Viṣṇu.[74]

II

The later texts on iconography have acknowledged twenty-four varieties of standing Viṣṇu images giving each of them a particular iconographical pattern. In fact the concept of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu seems to have been conceived right from the time of the *Mahābhārata*. While discussing cosmological problems, it is said that according to the Sāṅkhya system, the universe is made up of twenty-four elements. Beyond these elements stands the Supreme Being, Viṣṇu. He creates the universe with the help of these forms which are known as his *vyakta rūpas*, which can be visualized through images, while, He the twentyfifth, who is formless can never be represented in any way.[75] The twenty-four varieties of standing Viṣṇu images thus symbolize his different visible forms.

The only distinguishing point or difference between these images being merely the order of emblems held by the four hands, each variety deserves a separate description. The names of all the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu are mentioned in the list of the thousand names of Viṣṇu enumerated in the *Mahābhārata*,[76] but their emblems, etc., are not described. The order of the emblems of these forms given in the different texts does not tally with one another and hence, the choice of the right order becomes difficult to determine. The earliest description of the twenty-four forms appears in the *Agni purāṇa*.[77] The *Rūpamaṇḍana* and the *Aparājitapṛcchā* lists are the same as that of the *Agni purāṇa*, and hence that list could be considered more popular than the lists of other texts. Some of the texts, specially the *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās*, enumerate only twelve or sixteen varieties of Viṣṇu images instead of the twenty-four, because they attribute either three or four emanations to each of the principal four *vyūhas viz.*, Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. While discussing the images of the mediaeval period, we may follow this type of

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classification. The description of these twenty-four varieties described in different texts is given in Appendix A for comparison.

The cult of Viṣṇu was prevalent in all over northern India as attested by plenty of evidences. Apart from the stylistic peculiarities, the images datable from the 7th to the 10th century, display hardly any iconographic varieties. The most common type is, however, the Trivikrama form.

Innumerable images of Trivikrama have come to light from Northern India. An image of Trivikrama is preserved in the collection of the Baroda Museum (M. No. A.C.2.38), datable to the 7th century. A similar image is in situ in a temple at Gop in Gujarat. A panel on the wall of the Harsat Mata temple at Abaneri, represents the Trivikrama image of Viṣṇu. The head of the figure is lost, but has preserved the emblems quite well. It is peculiar that all the four emblems are represented in their personified forms, two on each side. Similar images of Trivikrama have also come to light from Bhilsa,[78] Devangana (Fig. 6), Ujjain,[79] Patan,[80] Dhank (Fig. 7), Baroda,[81] etc. The museums of U.P.[82] (Fig. 8, Lucknow Museum) and especially Eastern India[83] are full of this kind of Viṣṇu images.

Besides several Trivikrama images, an image from Benisagar, Shahbad, is preserved in the collection of the Patna Museum. This image, belonging to the 7th century, has in his main right and left hands the lotus and the conch respectively, whereas the upper right hand rests on the Cakra Puruṣa holding a disc in his hand and the upper left rests on the Gadā Devī standing in the *dvibhañga* posture.[84] The image is that of Śrīdhara according to the *Rūpamaṇḍana*.

A Pala bronze Viṣṇu, flanked by Śrī and Sarasvatī, is also an interesting image in the collection of the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta. The lower right hand holds the lotus, the upper right holds the disc, the upper left holds the mace and the lower left the conch. It is an image of Śrīdhara. A fabulously ornamented panel, representing the same variety, has been found from Radhanagar, Rajashahi. The lower two hands of the figure are mutilated, the upper right hand holds the disc and the upper left holds the mace. His consorts Śrī and Sarasvatī are standing by his sides in the *tribhañga* posture; the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu as well as Brahmā and Śiva are also carved.

A fine image of Śrīdhara is preserved in the private collection of the Mahant at Bodha Gaya. The upper two hands of the god are supported on the Cakra Puruṣa and the Gadā Devī, the other two hold the lotus and the conch (Fig. 10).

A partly mutilated image of Śrīdhara is in the Udaipur Museum, flanked by the *āyudha puruṣas* and the donor couple.

An image datable to the 9th century, in the Patna Museum, represents Govinda variety of Viṣṇu. The lower right hand of the figure is in the *varada-mudrā*, the upper right holds the mace, the upper left holds the lotus and the lower left holds

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the conch. He is flanked by his consorts Śrī and Sarasvatī as in many other contemporary pieces. This characteristic seems to have evolved during the Pala period because earlier images of Viṣṇu are never accompanied by his consorts. On the pedestal is seen Garuḍa. There are three other images of the same type in this museum (M. No. 1666, 1603, 6980).

The Baroda Museum has preserved two bronzes datable to the 10th century, which can be identified as Govinda (Baroda Museum No. A-C-5.78 and A-C-5.56). One of them is flanked by Śrī and Sarasvatī and the other is flanked by the *āyudha puruṣas*.

A 9th century image of Acyuta has come to light from Badol. The figure holds the mace in his lower right hand, the upper right hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā*, the disc is placed in the upper left hand and the conch is in the lower left hand. The conch is held peculiarly in a horizontal way.

The Indian Museum, Calcutta, has a delicately modelled image of Adhokṣaja having his lower right hand in the *varada-mudrā*, the upper right hand holding the mace, the upper left the conch, the lower left the disc. As usual with the Pala images, he is flanked by Śrī and Sarasvatī (Fig. 9).

A similar image of Adhokṣaja, datable to the 10th century, is preserved in the collection of the Asutosh Museum. The mace and the disc are represented in their personified forms, to the right and the left of the main image.

An image of Keśava was found in Assam from the adjoining regions of the river Deopani.[85] The upper left hand holds the conch and the lower left the mace.

An image of Keśava has come to light from Taka Taloa, Bhandak locality, in Chanda District, central India. The image holds the rosary, the conch, the disc and the mace in his hands, starting from the lower right.

Some mediaeval images of Dāmodara and Kṛṣṇa have been published by M.R. Majmudar.[86] The images of Puruṣottama, Vāsudeva, Adhokṣaja, belonging to a little later date have been reproduced by Dr. Sankalia.[87]

This survey of the *caturvimśati mūrtis* makes it clear that in the whole of northern India only selected forms of Viṣṇu have been worshipped by the people.

Numerically, the Trivikrama image tops the list of Viṣṇu images right from the early times. The other prevalent forms are – Puruṣottama, Keśava, Śrīdhara, Govinda, Adhokṣaja and Acyuta.

All these images, described or referred to above, are either installed in shrines and worshipped independently, or occupy the wall panels, but generally they are not found together in temples. An interesting record of these images is still present in a

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temple at Valam in Gujarat, where most of the varieties of standing four-handed images of Viṣṇu are not only carved together but are also identified by the inscriptions on their pedestals. Only seventeen of them have survived, from which the iconography of Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Kṛṣṇa, Trivikrama, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara tally exactly with the description given in the *Rūpamaṇḍana*, whereas Vāsudeva holds, starting from the lower right, the *akṣamālā* (with the *varada-mudrā*), the disc, the conch and the mace, instead of the mace, the conch, the disc and the lotus. The image of Mādhava holds the disc, the lotus, the conch and the mace instead of the mace, the disc, the conch and the lotus. Pradyumna holds the mace, the lotus, the disc and the conch, in place of the disc, the conch, the mace and the lotus. Vāmana holds the mace, the disc, the mace (?) and the lotus. Aniruddha holds the lotus, the mace, the conch and the disc in place of the disc, the mace, the conch and the lotus. The inscription on one of the images holding the lotus, the disc, the mace and the conch is not very clear.[88]

Generally the *caturviṁśati mūrtis* are carved in the *samabhañga* posture, but a few images in the *dvibhañga* posture have also come to light. A mutilated image of either Hari or Janārdana from Gwalior is articulated in the *dvibhañga* posture.[89] A similar image of Govinda has been found from Suhania[90] near Gwalior. It is the tendency of the sculptors of the Khajuraho group of temples to model the images in the rhythmic *dvibhañga* or the *tribhañga* posture, and hence some of the Viṣṇu images are also in these postures, for instance the images of Puruṣottama and Padmanābha in the Laksmana and Jagadambi temples.[91]

To sum up, stylistically the early images of Viṣṇu invariably have the lower right hand represented in a very peculiar way. The palm is stretched out as in the *varada-mudrā* and only the last pores of the fingers are bent to support a roundish object, presumably the lotus. The Kushana and early Gupta images are stout and short and all the four hands are held up above the shoulders. In the Gupta period the position of the hands undergoes certain changes. The main two hands are lowered down to the waist, and with the introduction of the *āyudha-puruṣas* the upper two hands also come down to rest on the head of the *āyudha-puruṣas*, so much so that they look like the lowermost pair of hands. It must be noted in such cases that even though these hands look like the lowermost, they are not considered to be so because, the main pair of hands is always considered to be the lower in the four-handed images of Viṣṇu. The words *dakṣiṇādhaḥ* and *mukhya dakṣiṇa* are synonyms.

The images of the mediaeval period tend to be more ornamental than those of the Gupta period. The representation of the emblems is very stylized and a definite attempt can be seen to make them very decorative and beautiful. The presence of the *āyudha-puruṣas* becomes very frequent. The *āyudha-puruṣas* are represented in a pot-bellied dwarfish form holding the emblems in their hands, standing in a *dvibhañga* posture.[92]

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According to the description given in the different texts cited in the table, the four-armed images are supposed to hold the four usual emblems of Viṣṇu *viz.* the conch, the lotus, the mace and the disc, but, as is clear from the images studied above, the sculptors very often take the liberty to represent the lower right hand of the god in the *varada* or the *abhaya-mudrā*.

The images of Viṣṇu discussed above are some of the very common types of the standing four-handed varieties. It will be interesting to examine some peculiar and uncommon types either found or described in the texts. According to the description given in the *Harivaṁśa*, Viṣṇu is supposed to be holding the bow, the disc, the mace with the bell (*ghaṇṭā*), and the sword.[93] The *Bṛhatbrahma Saṁhitā* also prescribes the sword, the plough, the conch and the disc.[94] The same text describes Śrīdhara as holding the shield (*carma*), the bow, the sword, and the lotus.[95] The *Sāttvata Saṁhitā* prescribes the *Kamaṇḍalu* in the hands of Nārāyaṇa,[96] whereas Viṣṇu holds the plough (*sīra*), the disc, the pestle and the mace.[97]

None of these iconographic forms seem to have been accepted by the sculptors for, so far, no Viṣṇu image holding the bell or the sword, etc. has come to light.

A couple of images from Bihar, now preserved in the collection of the Indian Museum, hold the citron fruit in the lower right hand instead of the lotus. Iconographically and stylistically both are very similar, belonging to the 11th century (Fig. 11). The image of Viṣṇu holding the citron fruit is not referred to by the texts on iconography, but Viṣṇu in his Viśvarūpa form holds this fruit.[98]

The *Viṣṇudharmottaram*[99] describes the image of Viṣṇu, holding his usual emblems and between his feet should be carved a small figure of the goddess Bhūmi. Its sculptural representation, published by Coomaraswamy, is a 9th century image from Kashmir, having a small figure of the goddess between his feet.[100] A very similar image from Kashmir is in a private collection in Bombay. This feature seems to have been current in Kashmir more than anywhere else.

A reference may here be made to an interesting image from Nalanda, datable to about the 9th century. The upper two hands of the god hold the mace and the disc, while the front two hands hold the conch near the chest, as if preparing to blow it. It is difficult to understand what the sculptor tries to represent by this (Fig. 12).

Sometimes the devotees of Hindu gods accept the Buddhist pattern of iconography. An image of Keśava from Gujarat bears an image of Viṣṇu on his crown, like the figure of the *dhyānī* Buddha on the crown of a Bodhisattva. It represents something like the emanation of the different forms from the Mahā Viṣṇu or Viṣṇu as the Parama Puruṣa.[101]

Lastly, one iconographic peculiarity in the image of the four-handed Viṣṇu may be mentioned. An image in the Lucknow Museum, holding the emblems of the

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Trivikrama order, is flanked on the right side by Lakṣmī and on the left side by a small haloed figure holding a snake in his hand. This figure may be identified as a personified representation of the serpent Śeṣa who is always connected with Viṣṇu at the time of creation, as also is Lakṣmī, or it can also be Garuḍa in his personified form. A similar figure of the personified Śeṣa or Garuḍa, as also found in an image of Viṣṇu referred to above, is now preserved in the Watson Museum, Rajkot.

The six-handed variety of Viṣṇu images is also described in the texts on iconography and religion. The *Sāttvata Saṁhitā* prescribes the sword (*nistriṁśa*), the lotus and the mace in the right hands and the bow, the arrow and the conch in his left hands.[102]

The image of Viṣṇu with eight hands holding the different emblems has been described by various texts, the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*[103] describes this kind of image as follows :

"The image of Viṣṇu can either be eight, four or two-handed. His chest bears the *śrīvatsa* mark and it should be adorned with the *kaustubha* gem. He should be made as dark as the sesame flower. He is clothed in a yellow garment and has a benign expression on his face. He wears a diadem, earrings and has roundish neck, chest, shoulders and arms. Of the eight arms the right four carry the dagger, the mace, the arrow and one hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā*; and the left four carry the bow, the disc and the conch."

The *Matsya Purāṇa* also gives an almost similar description of the eight-handed variety. The right hands should hold the dagger, the mace, the arrow and the lotus, and the left hands hold the bow, the shield, the conch and the disc.[104]

The order of emblems according to the *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa* is slightly different. It prescribes the dagger, the mace, the arrow and the lotus for the right hands and the conch, the bow, the disc and the shield for the left hands.[105]

The *Sāttvata Saṁhitā* attributes some different emblems to Viṣṇu. He is supposed to hold in the right hands the mace, the pestle, the disc, the sword, and in his left hands the conch, the trident, the noose and the bow together with the arrow.[106]

The eight-handed images of Viṣṇu have been preserved in the Mathura Museum, belonging to the early Gupta period. The lower portion of one of them (M. No. 1010) has been lost, as also the left arms. Two of the right hands hold the sword and the arrow and the other arm, which is stretched across the chest, seems to hold the lance. The other image is also mutilated and hence all the emblems are not clear. The right hands hold the dagger, the arrow, the lance or the noose and an unidentifiable object. The only extant left hand holds the conch.[107]

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Viṣṇu images with more than eight hands have also been referred to. The *Sāttvata Saṁhitā* describes the ten-handed Viṣṇu, holding in the right hands the dagger, the arrow, the mace, the lotus, the lance, whereas in his left hands he holds the bow, the conch, the disc, the sword and the lower left hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā*.[108]

The same text also describes a Viṣṇu with twelve hands. The six right hands hold the lotus, the dagger, the disc, the arrow and the mace and the trident. The left hands have the conch, the noose, the third one is in the *abhaya-mudrā*, the rest hold the lance, the pestle and the bow.[109]

The fourteen-handed variety should hold, according to the same text, the conch, the mace, the trident, the noose, the pestle, the hammer and the plough in his left hands, and the staff, the lotus, the thunderbolt, the disc, the dagger, the axe and the lance in his right hands.[110] This multi-handed variety of the Viṣṇu image has not come to light so far upto the mediaeval period.

The early iconography of Viṣṇu is very simple representing him only in one iconographical form which must have been the only established form of the Viṣṇu image till the Gupta period. Later on in the mediaeval period it becomes more complicated because an attempt was made to represent the various aspects of Viṣṇu, merely through the order of emblems. Not satisfied even with this the sculptors and the devotees try to represent his superhuman qualities through the multiple hands and emblems, as reflected in several texts on iconography and religion. When this form with multiple hands and emblems was blended with the Caturmūrti, it gave rise to the image of Mahāviṣṇu which is dealt with later.

Seated Images :

The images of Viṣṇu, seated on his *vāhana* Garuḍa, were also worshipped by the people, though not as commonly as the standing ones. Viṣṇu on his *vāhana* Garuḍa has already been referred to in the *Mahābhārata*.[111]

The *Harivaṁśa* describes images of Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuḍa. Three of his four hands should hold the conch, the disc, and the mace but nothing is said about the emblem to be held by the fourth hand.[112]

Though Viṣṇu is described as seated on his mount the early images show him to be seated on the pedestal, exactly in the manner of the early Kubera figures. One of the seated images of Viṣṇu, datable to the Kushana period, is in the collection of the Mathura Museum. The image seems to have been four-handed but the upper right hand is lost. The lower right hand is raised to the shoulder, in the *abhaya-mudrā*, the palm being joined to the back slab. The upper left hand holds the disc while the emblem of the lower left hand is lost. On either side of Viṣṇu are two squatting figures, with one of their hands resting on the ground, identified by Diskalkar as the consorts of Viṣṇu. It is apparent from the disc around the head of one of them that

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the figures represent the *āyudha puruṣas*, hence the figure on the left is the Cakra Puruṣa and on the right is the Gadā Devī.[113] A similar figure in red sandstone is preserved in the same museum (Fig. 14).

A haloed image of Viṣṇu seated in the *lalitāsana* is from Mathura belonging to the same period. The lower right hand which is raised to the shoulder is in the *abhaya-mudrā*. The upper right hand is resting on the mace, the other end of which is supported on the ground. The lower left hand rests on the big disc which is also placed on the ground. The upper left hand holds the conch. Below the folded right leg of the god near the mace is a small female figure that can be identified as Gadā Devī.[114]

The Gupta temple at Deogarh has a seated image of Viṣṇu, of which only the left side has survived. He sits on a cot like some early Buddha images. Another image on Garuḍa forms a part of the Karivarada relief, at Deogarh. It represents Viṣṇu on his mount Garuḍa, when he came to the rescue of the elephant. But for his feathers, Garuḍa is completely in a human form. Viṣṇu is seated on his shoulders holding the mace in his lower right hand and supporting his lower left hand on his knees. The two upper hands are mutilated.[115] An exactly similar image has come to light from Deogarh fort belonging to the later period. Actually Viṣṇu on Garuḍa indicates that he is flying.

The Gandharesvara temple at Sirpur has a beautiful image of the four-handed Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa, who has a human body with curly hair and leaflike feathers. A serpent is wound round the neck like a necklace. Viṣṇu holds the lotus in his right lower hand, the conch in his upper right hand, the upper left hand is broken and the lower left is supported on the knee. This haloed figure adorned with various ornaments excepting the *vanamālā* is a specimen of the eighth century art of central India.[116]

Some stray images of the seated Viṣṇu have come to light from western India belonging to the mediaeval period. A panel in the Ajmer Museum (M. No. 286) represents Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuḍa. Unfortunately, the image is very mutilated, only the mace and the disc survive in the upper two hands.

A fine specimen of the 9th century has been preserved on the outer wall of the Harihara temple I at Osian, near Jodhpur (Fig. 14). Viṣṇu is seated on the shoulders of Garuḍa who is depicted completely in human form. The lower right hand of the god is in the *varada-mudrā*, the upper right holds the mace, the upper left holds the disc and the emblem of the lower left hand is not clear.

An interesting image at the Kotah Museum, datable to the 8th century, represents Viṣṇu seated on pedestal instead of Garuḍa, in the *lalitāsana* posture. His right leg is slightly folded and the left one is hanging down. He holds in his lower right hand the lotus which is partly mutilated, the upper right hand holds the disc, the upper left the mace and the lower left the conch.

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An image from Patan, seated in the *padmāsana* posture, has been preserved in the Baroda Museum. It occupies a part of the image frame datable to the 8th century. The lower right hand of the god is in the *varada-mudrā*, the upper right is in the *abhaya-mudrā*, the upper left holds the lotus and the lower left holds the conch.

Images of the Trivikrama form, seated on the Garuḍa, are found on the walls of the Kandaria Mahadev and the Visvanatha temple at Khajuraho.[117]

An image in the Asutosh Museum belonging to the 8th century represents Garuḍa with beautifully serrated feathers carved behind his human body. He supports the feet of Viṣṇu with both of his hands. The emblems in the hands of Viṣṇu are the lotus, the mace, the disc, and the conch as usual (Fig. 15).

The eastern Indian images of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa show a stylistic variation. The figure of Garuḍa is not represented in human form as in the images described above. An 8th century image in the Indian Museum (Fig. 16) shows Viṣṇu seated on the back of a big Garuḍa with his feathers spread out to support Viṣṇu as well as the *āyudha-puruṣas*, who are shown to be seated on the feathers only. An exactly similar image is in the Cleveland Museum.[118]

A peculiar Pala bronze of Viṣṇu from Bengal sits in the *mahārājalilāsana* as in the Buddhist images. It is an exquisite image, holding the mace and the disc in his two upper hands, the other two befitting the *āsana* (Fig. 17).

The multi-handed images of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa are also referred to. The *Harivaṁśa* describes a six-handed variety mounted on Garuḍa, holding the conch, the disc, the mace, the dagger, the bow and the arrow, and wearing an armour. A temple of Limboji Mata at Delmal has preserved a six-handed Viṣṇu on Garuḍa but unfortunately it is mutilated and hence the emblems in the hands are not clear. Two of the three right hands have survived. One is in the *varada-mudrā*, one holds the mace. One of the left hands holds the disc and the rest are mutilated.

The eight-handed variety of seated Viṣṇu is referred to in the *Īśānaśiva*. The god, seated on Garuḍa, should hold the conch, the disc, the noose, the trident, the bow, the arrow, the mace and the sword.[119]

The *Sāttvata Saṁhitā* describes a seated Viṣṇu with twelve hands, holding in his right hands the disc, the lotus, the mace, the arrow, the trident and the spear while in his left hands he holds the lance, the noose, the bow, the pestle, the hammer and the shield.[120]

Generally, these multi-handed seated Viṣṇu images are blended with the Vaikuṇṭha image and hence are endowed with the additional heads of the lion and

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the boar. Such images, known as Trailokyamohana and Ananta variety, are seen only late in the mediaeval period.

The reclining or sleeping images of Viṣṇu are always associated with Śeṣa and hence are dealt with in another chapter.

Notes

1. Macdonell, A.A., *Vedic Mythology*, Varanasi, 1963, pp. 37-39.
2. Keith, A.B., *Indian Mythology* (Mythology of All Races, Vol. VI), New York, 1964, p. 29.
3. Hopkins, E.W., *The Religions of India*, Boston, 1895, p. 56. He says : "In the person of Viṣṇu the sun is extolled under another name."
4. Gonda, J., *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, Utrecht, 1954, pp. 1-11.
5. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 14, 11, 1, 5.
6. *Mahābhārata* (ed. Suthankar, V.S.), Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, VII, 166, 44.
7. *Ibid*, XII, 336, 54.
8. *Ibid.*, XII, 328, 35.
9. *Mahābhārata* (ed. Suthankar, V.S.), Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, V, 47 ff.
10. *Ibid.*, XII, 335.
11. *Ibid.*, XII, 336-338.
12. सर्ववासं वासुदेवं क्षेत्रज्ञं विध्धि तत्वतः ।
    समाहित मनस्काश्च नियताः संयतेन्द्रियाः ।
    एकान्त भावोपगता वासुदेवं विशान्ति ते ॥
    Ibid., XII, 332, 17-18.
    or
    सर्वभूतकृतावासो वासुदेवेति चोच्यते ।
    Ibid., XII, 335, 7.
13. अहोहृयेकान्तिनः सर्वान्प्रीणाति भगवान्हरिः ।
    विधिप्रयुक्तां पूजां च ग्रह्णाति भगवान्स्वयम् ॥
    Ibid., XII, 336, 1.
14. एवमेकं सांख्ययोगं वेदारण्यकमेव च ।
    परस्परांगान्येतानि पाञ्चरात्रं च कथ्यते ।
    एष एकान्तिनां धर्मो नारायण परात्मकः ॥
    Ibid., XII, 336, 76.
15. *Ibid.*, XII, 336, 41.
16. *Ibid.*, XII, 336, 78.
17. *Ibid.*, V, 20 and 47.
18. *Ibid.*, III, 188, 8; IV, 67, 24, etc.
19. *Ibid.*, V, 69, 8.
20. *Ibid.*, I, 1, 103.
21. *Ibid.*, I, 177, 16.
22. *Ibid.*, VI, 61, 66.
23. *Ibid.*, XII, 326, 38-39.
24. *Ibid.*, XII, 332, 13-16
25. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* (Tr. Shastri, V.S.), Bangalore, 1947, LVIII, 40.
26. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (referred to as *Viṣṇudharmottaram* for convenience) (ed. Shah, Priyabala), Baroda, 1958. III, 85, 78.
27. *Vaikhānasāgama* (ed. Shastri, K.S.), Trivandrum, 1935. *Paṭala*. 59.
28. *Mahābhārata*, XII, 326, 43.
29. एकव्यूहविभागो वा क्वचिद्विव्यूहसंज्ञितः ।
    त्रिव्यूहश्चापि संख्यात चतुर्व्यूहश्च द्रश्यते ॥
    Ibid., XII, 336, 53.

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30. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I, 8, 1-6.
31. Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 387 ff.
32. .....भगवतां वृष्णीनां पञ्चवीरानां प्रतिमाः.. ...शैलदेव ।
गृह अर्चादेशं शैलं पञ्चज्वलत इव परम वपुषः.....॥
Ep. Ind., Vol. XXIV, p. 194 ff.
33. Vogel, J. Ph., *La Sculpture de Mathura*, Paris, 1930, Pl. XLIII.
34. Agrawal, V.S., *Indian Art*, Varanasi, 1965, Pl. L, figs. 166-167.
35. वसुना भगवतो वासुदेवस्य महास्थान.....शैलं तोरणं वेदिका च ।
प्रतिस्थापितो प्रीतो भगवान् वासुदेवः स्वामीस्य महाक्षत्रपस्य शोडासस्य संवर्तयताम् ।
Ep. Ind., Vol. XXIV, pp. 208 ff.
36. Agrawal, V.S., *Indian Art*, p. 252.
37. कारितो अयं राज्ञा भगवतेन गाजायनेन पराशरी पुत्रेण (सर्वतातेन अश्वमेधया) जिनां भगवदभ्यां संकर्षण वासुदेवाभ्यां (अनहिताभ्यां सर्वेश्वरा) भ्यां पूजा शिला प्राकारो नारायण वाटिका ॥
Ep. Ind., Vol. XVI, p. 25 ff.
Also see Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, Calcutta, 1942, p. 92.
38. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XXII, p. 198 ff.
39. Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 90; also Vogel, J. Ph., "The Garuḍa Pillar of Besnagar". *ASIAR*, 1908-09, 'p. 126 ff; and
Khare, Discovery of a Viṣṇu Temple near Heliodorus Pillar, Besnagar. *Lalit Kalā*, No. 13.
40. Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
41. Banerjea, J.N., *Pañcopāsanā* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1960, pp. 57-58.
42. Bhandarkar, R.G. *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Sects*, Strassburg, 1913, p. 26.
Also see Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.
43. McCrindle, *Ptolemy* (ed. Majumdar and Sastri), p. 121.
44. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, IV, 3, 95.
45. See Sauvira Jayaswal, Early History of Vaishnavism, Delhi, 1967, Ch. I.
46. Allan, J., *A Catalogue of the Indian coins in the British Museum*, London, 1936, Pl. XXIX, 6.
47. *Harivaṁśa*, Poona, 1936. II, 109, 95-103.
48. *Mahābhārata*, XIV, 1924.
49. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 85, 16-18.
50. Agrawal, V.S., *Indian Art*, pp. 330-331.
51. *Mahābhārata*, I, 2, 365.
52. *Ibid.*, I, 20.
53. एकवक्त्र चतुर्बाहुः सौम्यरूपः सुदर्शनः ।
सलिलघ्मातमेघाभः सर्वाभरणभूषितः ॥
.....
मध्येन त्रिवलिभङ्ग शोभितेन सुचारुणा ।
स्त्रीरूपधारिणी क्षोणी कार्यातत्पाद मध्यगा ॥
.....
उत्फुल्ल कमलं पाणौ कुर्यात् देवस्य दक्षिणे ।
वामपाणिगतं शंखं शंखाकारं तु कारयेत् ॥
दक्षिणे तु गदादेवी तनुमध्या सुलोचना ।
स्त्रीरुप धारिणी मुग्धा सर्वाभरण भूषणा ॥
Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 2-15.
54. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, LVIII, 31-40.
55. Dr. Banerjea's identification of some seated Sūrya images with Sāmba is not convincing. Cf. Banerjea, J.N., Images of Sāmba, *JISOA*, Vol. XII, 1944, p. 129.
56. It may be noted here that there is a marked difference in the classification of the Viṣṇu images in the north Indian and the south Indian texts. The south Indian texts, referred here

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only in passing, classify the *sthānaka*, *āsana* and *śayana* of Viṣṇu into *yoga*, *bhoga*, *vīra* and *abhicāraka*, depending exclusively on the qualitative aspect of the god. Further classification into the *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama* depends on the accessory figures in the image. It is not necessary to discuss the descriptions given in south Indian texts (cf. *Vaikhānasāgama*, *Paṭala* 61, *Atrisaṁhitā*, Adh. 61) because it has already been given in detail by T.A.G. Rao in his *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 71 ff.

57. यः सः चक्रगदापाणिः पीतवाससितप्रभः ।
पद्मनाभः सुरारिघ्नः पृथुचार्वञ्चिते क्षणः ।

Mahābhārata, I, 58, 49.

58. द्विभुजस्यतु शान्तिकरो दक्षिणहस्तोऽपरश्च शंखधरः ।

Bṛhatsaṁhitā (Bangalore, 1947), LVIII, 35.

59. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 60, 2.
60. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Anandasram Sanskrit Series, Poona, 1907, 258, 6.
61. *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda, 1925, 77, 40.
62. Mathura Museum, Nos. 781; 891; 919; 933; 956; 1729; 2487.
63. Agrawal, V.S., Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva in the Mathura Art, *JUPHS*, Vol. XXII, p. 105.
Also refer to Diskalkar, D.B., Sculptures in the Mathura Museum, *JUPHS*, Vol. V, Pl. 3.
64. Agrawal, V.S., *op. cit.*, pp. 105-107.
Diskalkar, D.B., *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.
65. Annual Administrative Report of the Archaeological Department, Gwalior State, for the year 1928-29, Pl. III.
66. *Corp. Insc. Ind.*, Vol. III, p. 56 ff.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 88 ff.
Also refer to Bajpai, K.D., *Sagar Through the Ages*, Sagar, 1964, p. 12.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 121 ff.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 139 ff.
70. Altekar, A.S., *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Benaras, 1957, p. 145, Pl. XVIII, 14.
71. *Annual Progress Report, Arch. Survey Western Circle*, for the year 1903-04, p. 21.
72. Dhruva, H.H., Sanskrit Grants and Inscriptions of Gujarat Kings, *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. X, pp. 158-60.
73. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, III, 350.
74. *Ibid.*, IV, 78; IV, 194.
75. पञ्चविंशतिमो विष्णुर्निस्तत्वस्तत्वसंज्ञकः ।
तत्त्वसंश्रणयादेतत्तत्वमाहुर्मनीषिणः ।।
यदमूर्त्यसृजद्व्यक्तं तत्तन्मूर्त्यधितिष्ठति ।
चतुर्विंशतिमो व्यक्तोहयमूर्तः पञ्चविंशकः ।।

Mahābhārata, XII, 291, 37-38.

Also see *ibid.*, XII, 294, 38-43.

76. *Ibid.*, XIII, 149.
77. *Agni Purāṇa*, Anandasram Sanskrit Series, Poona, 1957, 48, 1-12.
78. Annual Administrative Report, Archaeological Department, Gwalior State, for the year 1936-37, Pl. IV, a & c.
79. *Ibid.*, for the year 1934-35, Pl. VII, a & d.
80. Dave, K.B., *Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān*. Ahmedabad, 1963, Pl. XI.
81. Majmudar, M.R., Studies in the varieties of Viṣṇu Images in Gujarat, *Journal of the Gujarat Research Society*, 1939, No. 4, Pl. opp. p. 58.
82. Mathura Museum Exhibit No. D. 21, D. 35, etc.
Lucknow Museum Exhibit No. 45.81, 44.48, 0.275, 0.199, etc.
83. Patna Museum Exhibit No. 64, 9812, etc.
Indian Museum Exhibit No. 3873, A25193, A25194, A25185, etc.

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84. Gupta, P.L., *Catalogue of the Patna Museum*, Patna, 1965, Pl. X. In the Catalogue, the image is described as Puruṣottama.
85. Dixit, K.N., *ASIAR*, 1923-24, pp. 81-82, Pl. XXXa.
86. Majmudar, M.R., *op. cit.*, Plate opp. p. 58, figs. V & X.
87. Sankalia, H.D., *Archaeology of Gujarat*, Bombay, 1941, Pl. XXXIV.
88. I am indebted to Dr. R.N. Mehta for giving me this information.
89. Annual Administrative Report of the Arch. Dept., Gwalior State, for the year 1934-35, Pl. VII, c.
90. *Ibid.*, for the year 1927-28, Pl. VI, d.
91. Agrawal, Urmila, *Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance*, Delhi, 1964, Figs. 6, 7, 8.
92. Pramod Chandra, *Master Bronzes of India*, Chicago, 1965, Pl. 13. This image of cakra puruṣa from Kashmir is a fine example of the *āyudha puruṣa* of the Gupta period.
93. विष्णु संग्रामसंभूतं प्रगृहय विपुलं धनुः ।
प्रतिष्ठत महाबाहुः पाणिना चक्रमादधत् ॥
गदां सघंटां अन्येन खड्गमन्येन पाणिना ।
प्रगृह्य सोऽग्रतो तिष्ठद्रुद्रायोद्यत पाणये ॥
Harivaṁśa, III, 32, 36-37.
94. विष्णुं च दक्षिणे कुक्षौ गौरवर्णं मनोहरम् ।
चक्रं शंखं हलं खड्गं बिभ्राणं क्षौमवाससम् ॥
Bṛhatbrahma Saṁhitā, Anandasram Sanskrit Series 13, 65.
95. *Ibid.*, XIII, 69.
96. *Sāttvata Saṁhitā*, (ed. P.R.A. Chariar), Kandu, 1902, XII, 42-43.
97. सिन्दूरशिखराकारं एकवक्त्रं चतुर्भुजम् ।
अतसीपुष्पसंकाश ... ...
मुख्येन पाणियुग्मेन तुल्यमाद्यस्य वै विभोः
सीरं चक्रं च हस्तेऽस्य मुसलं तु गदा करे ।
Ibid., V, 12-14.
98. *Aparājitapṛcchā* (ed. Mankad, P.A.), Baroda, 1950, 219, 29.
99. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 85, 2-6.
100. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian & Indonesian Art*, London, 1927, Pl. XCI, Fig. 272.
101. Majmudar, M.R., *op. cit.*, p. 50, Pl. VI.
102. षड्भुजो दक्षिणैर्धत्ते निस्त्रिंशं कमलं गदाम् ।
सशरं कार्मुकं शंखं वामैरस्त्रोत्तमं त्रिभिः ॥
Sāttvata Saṁhitā, XII, 222.
103. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, LVII, 31-33.
104. खड्गो गदा शरः पद्म दिव्यं दक्षिणतो हरेः ।
धनुश्च खेटकं चैव शंखचक्रं च वामतः ॥
Matsya Purāṇa, 258, 7.
105. *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa* (ed. Sankhyatirtha, V.M.), Calcutta, 1936, V, 69.
106. गदामुसलचक्रासीनष्टबाहुस्तु दक्षिणै ।
शंखमङ्कुपाशौ च वामेस्तु सशरं धनुः ॥
Sāttvata Saṁhitā, XII, 223.
107. Bajpai, K.D., Two Rare Images of Viṣṇu from Mathura. *JUPHS*, Vol. II, Part i-ii, 1954, p. 17.
108. खड्गबाणगदापद्मशक्तियुक्तास्तु दक्षिणाः ।
दशबाहोः धनुः शंखचक्रखड्गाश्च साभयाः ॥
Sāttvata Saṁhitā, XII, 224.

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109. षण्णां दक्षिणहस्तानां द्विषट्कभुजभूषितः ।
सन्धत्ते कमलं खड्गचक्रबाणगदांकुशान् ॥
शखंपाशाभयान् शक्तिं सव्यानां मुसलं धनुः ।

Sāttvata Saṁhitā, XII, 225.

110. चतुर्दशभुजोधत्ते वामे तु भुज सप्तके ।
शंखं गदांकुशौ पाशं मुसलं मुद्गरं हलं ॥
दण्डाब्जकुलिशान् चक्रं खड्गशक्तिपरश्वधान् ॥

Ibid., XII, 227.

111. तं वव्रे वाहनं कृष्णो गरुत्मन्तं महाबलं ।
ध्वजं चक्रे भगवानुपरि स्थास्यसीति तम् ।

Mahābhārata, I, 29, 16.

112. शंखचक्रगदापाणिं गरुडस्योपरि स्थितम् ।

Harivaṁśa, II, 99, 11.

113. Diskalkar, D.B., *op. cit.*, p. 24, Pl. III.
114. Diskalkar, D.B., *op. cit.*, Pl. IV.
115. Vats, M.S., Gupta Temple at Deogarh, *MASI*, No. 70, Pl. Xa.
116. Dikshit, M.G., *Sirpur and Rajim Temples*, Bombay, 1960, Pl. 48.
117. Agrawal, Urmila, *op. cit.* p. 31, Pl. 7.
118. Agrawal, R.C., Unpublished Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu from Eastern India, *Lalit Kalā*, No. 12, Oct. 1962, Pl. XXIX, fig. 3.
119. *Īśānaśiva*, Trivandrum, 1920. *Purvārdha*, *Paṭala* 35 *śl.* 115.
120. *Sāttvata Saṁhitā*, XII, 95-97.

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ŚEṢA-NĀRĀYAṆA[1]

The association of Viṣṇu with the serpent Śeṣa has its roots in the concept of Nārāyaṇa as the Lord of the waters, referred to in the *Mahābhārata*. As already mentioned in the introduction, Nārāyaṇa has his abode on the Primaeval waters. When Viṣṇu was identified with Nārāyaṇa he was also conceived to have been reclining on the primordial waters on the serpent-bed and creating a lotus from his navel of his own will, from which Brahmā was born.[2] The *Jayākhya Saṁhitā* mentions that before the creation of this universe, Bhagavān created Brahmā from his own navel, of his own will.[3] In the *Śanti Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* also, Viṣṇu is described as reclining on the coils of the serpent.[4]

The serpent Śeṣa is recognized as a form of Viṣṇu.[5] It symbolises eternity[6] as his name Aṇanta suggests. It is also associated with Balarāma, the brother of Vāsudeva. In fact Balarāma is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa.[7] So it seems that when the cult of Viṣṇu was evolving, the Nāga worship which was very prominent in India, had a definite role to play in its evolution and iconography. In short as Gonda has surmised, "Viṣṇu sleeps on Śeṣa and Viṣṇu is Śeṣa, Śeṣa is the form of Supreme Being."[8] Viṣṇu reclining on Śeṣa represents him in his eternal existence.

I

Viṣṇu and Śeṣa are generally represented together in the image of Śeṣaśāyī, though the standing and the sitting images of Viṣṇu with Śeṣa are not unknown.

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The standing images of Viṣṇu under the serpent hood are not described in the texts on iconography but such images have come to light, though very few in number.

A four armed bust has survived from the Gupta temple at Deogarh which shows Viṣṇu under the canopy of a serpent-hood. Out of the four hands only the upper right hand holding the disc has survived (Fig. 18).

A square stone in the Allahabad Museum, datable to the 5th century A.D., represents the four-handed Viṣṇu with serpent-hood. The image is much mutilated but it seems to be holding the usual emblems of Viṣṇu. There are clear traces of the snake-hood behind the image (Allahabad Museum No. 259).

There are a few such images known from eastern part of India, in the collection of the Asutosh and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museums. They show some Buddhist influence and hence are treated in the chapter on the composite images.

There are a couple of other such images also found from eastern India. A bronze image of great iconographic significance is preserved in the collection of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. The head of the image is canopied by a seven-hooded serpent, showing a human face on each of them as the serpent is represented in its personified form, each of the personified head is again canopied by three serpent hoods. The personified *nāgas* are holding some indistinct object in their hands. The main image carved in the *dvibhañga* posture, is six-handed. The lowest right hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā*, the middle one holds the disc and the upper right holds a cornucopia surmounted by a *makara*. The lowest left hand holds possibly the *kamala-nāla* on which Lakṣmī is seated with folded hands. R.D. Banerji identifies it as Garuḍa *dhvaja*, but as the figure on it is a female figure, its identification as Lakṣmī on the lotus is more probable.[9] A parallel device of carving Lakṣmī as a part of Viṣṇu image is seen in an image found from Bivli in Konkan, where Viṣṇu holds Lakṣmī in a lotus flower held by him.[10] The image is flanked by Śaṅkha Puruṣa and Cakra Puruṣa holding their emblems. A very rare feature about this image is the presence of the cornucopia surmounted by a *makara*. The *makara* and the cornucopia are considered to be the *nidhis* and are held by the deities bestowing prosperity to their devotees. The goddess Śrī or Lakṣmī is associated with the horn of plenty.[11] Gaṇapati, who fulfils the desires of his devotees, is also associated with the horn as evidenced by both sculptural and textual evidences.[12] The association of Śṛñga, a symbol of fertility and prosperity, with Viṣṇu is appropriate in the same connection. A form of Mahāviṣṇu, designated as Trailokyamohana, is supposed to hold a cornucopia in his hands[13] (Fig. 20).

II

The seated image of Viṣṇu on Śeṣa is described in detail in south Indian texts. The image is rightly designated Ādimūrti because it represents Viṣṇu before the first creation. "The god should be seated on Ananta with the right leg folded and

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the left one hanging down. The right hand should be placed on the right knee and the left hand on the thigh. The other two hands hold the disc and the conch. The serpent should have either five or seven hoods. He is decked with ornaments and is flanked by Bhṛgu and the *ṛṣis* and Śankara."[14] The south Indian examples of the type have been published by T.A.G. Rao, from Badami and Aihole.[15] The form does not seem to have been favourite in north India because only a couple of images of this kind have come to light from there. On the top of the doorway of the main sanctum of the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, can be seen Viṣṇu seated on the coils of the serpent canopied by his seven hoods. His lower right hand is placed on his knee and the upper one holds the disc. The upper left hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā* while the other holds the conch. His left leg hanging down, is being shampooed by Lakṣmī who is sitting on the ground. To the right of the main figure is a dwarf probably the Vāmana Avatāra of Viṣṇu and to his left is Nṛsimha Avatāra. Both of them are paying their respects to Viṣṇu, the Lord of Creation, and show the *añjali-mudrā* (Fig. 19).

An exactly similar image of Viṣṇu is in the Udayagiri cave at Bhuvanesvara, reproduced by Danielou Alain.[16] Both of these images date as early as the 5th century A.D., suggesting thereby the prevalence of this iconographic form of Viṣṇu in that period, which later on seems to have been given up completely. We may infer from its early representations of Badami and Aihole and its persistence in the south, that this form has been introduced to north India from the south, particularly Deccan.

III

A very popular form of Viṣṇu with Śeṣa is the Śeṣaśāyī or the Jalāśayana-mūrti. The description of this type of image is almost identical in all the different texts.

The *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa* gives a detailed account of the Jalāśaya Viṣṇu : The god is to be carved reclining on the coils of the serpent Śeṣa amidst the waters. One of his hands is resting on the thigh and the other is near his navel. One of the upper hands is near the head and the other holds the *santānamañjarī*. Brahmā is to be carved in the lotus issuing from the navel of Hari while the demons should be holding the lotus stalk.[17]

The description given in the south Indian texts is much more detailed. The image as usual is divided into *yoga, bhoga, vīra* and *abhicāraka.* The Yoga-śayana-mūrti is only two-handed, the right hand placed near the pillow and the other is in the *kaṭaka* pose. By his side should be placed Bhṛgu and Mārkaṇḍeya and near his feet the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha; while on the lotus issuing from Viṣṇu's navel should be Brahmā. Above the image on the back wall should be sculptured the *āyudha-puruṣas*, Garuḍa, Viśvakṣena and seven *ṛṣis*—all in the *añjali-mudrā.* The Bhoga-śayana-mūrti has four hands two of them same as in the *Yoga-śayana,* but nothing is said about the other two hands. Goddess Lakṣmī should be seated near his

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head holding a lotus in her right hand. Bhūmidevī should be shampooing his left foot. To the right of the main image should be Mārkaṇḍeya and to his left Bhṛgu. On the south wall of the shrine should be Brahmā and on the north Śiva. Near his feet should be demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Brahmā should be seated on the lotus issuing from Viṣṇu's navel, to his right should be five *āyudha-puruṣas*, Garuḍa and Sūrya. To the left of Brahmā should be Aśvins and Tamburu and Nārada represented as young children.

In the *Vīra-śayanamūrti*, Viṣṇu holds the conch and the disc in his two hands, the other two being same as in the other images. By the side of his feet should be Lakṣmī and Bhūmidevī. The demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha should be holding the feet of Viṣṇu in their hands. Brahmā is seated on the lotus. The other accessory figures are to be carved as in the other images.

The Abhicārakamūrti represents the figure of Viṣṇu reclining flatly on the coils of the serpent.[18]

The theme of Śeṣaśāyī was quite familiar to the people and the artists of the Gupta period. A very fine example of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu has been preserved on the Gupta temple at Deogarh (Fig. 21). Viṣṇu is shown elegantly reclining on the serpent bed with his right leg slightly bent and his upper left hand supporting his head canopied by seven serpent-hoods. His lower left hand is resting on the bed, the upper right is touching the canopy and the lower right is supported on his right knee. His right leg is stretched on the lap of Bhūmidevī. Behind her is standing a *caurī*-bearer and to her left appears Garuḍa, having a beaky nose. He is seizing a serpent, wound round his neck. Rao, Banerjea, and Vats have wrongly identified him as the *āyudha puruṣa*,[19] as also the *caurī*-bearer standing by his side. Brahmā is seated on a lotus in the centre which is issuing from the waters and not from the navel of Viṣṇu. He holds a *kamaṇḍalu* in his hand. To his left stand Indra and Kartikeya seated on their mounts, the elephant and the peacock respectively. To the left of Brahmā appear Śiva and Pārvatī seated on the bull and to the extreme left is probably a *kinnara*. On the lower part of the panel are shown the Gadādevī, the Cakra puruṣa, the Śaṅkha puruṣa and the Khadga puruṣa. The demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha are holding swords in their hands and their left arms are akimbo.

Another contemporary image has been represented in the cave No. 14 of the Udayagiri caves. The image is much similar in composition to the one described above. Viṣṇu is flatly lying on the bed of serpent coils. One of his right hands supports his head and the other three are broken. The *vanamālā* can be seen flowing down the knees. On the top of the panel are Garuḍa, the *āyudha-puruṣas* and the demons.[20]

The 6th century image of Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyī is still surviving on the top of the gateway of the main shrine of the Rajivalocana temple at Rajim. It is a vigorous representation and its interest also lies in the fact that it is one of the

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early representations of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. One of his left hands supports his head while the other holds the conch. One of the right hands holds the disc and the other is held straight and looks as if it is pointing at the demon with the first finger. Bhūmidevī is massaging his feet and by her sides appear probably the demons. Brahmā is seated on the lotus issuing from his navel. Below on the panel is shown Garuḍa holding two snakes in his hands and flanking him are the Nāgas in the *añjalimudrā*. It is quite likely that the temple was dedicated to Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu[21] (Fig. 23).

The Śeṣaśāyī form, though known fairly well to the people, did not acquire a very important place in Viṣṇu's iconography. There is hardly any change or evolution in the representation of this form. The later images are at times accompanied by a number of accessory figures like the *ṛṣis*, the *grahas*, the *mātṛkā* figures, the incarnations of Viṣṇu etc. Apart from this minor elaboration the main figure remains the same.

Mathura Museum preserves a beautiful Śeṣaśāyī image of 7th-8th century. The four-handed Viṣṇu supports his head by the upper right hand, the lower right holds the lotus, upper left holds the disc and the lower left is mutilated. The goddess sitting on a stool is shampooing his right foot. Behind his left leg are the two demons and a *caurī*-bearer. In the upper portion of the panel are Navagrahas and the lower some devotees (Fig. 24).

A 9th century image from the temple of Jagannathaji near Dilvara has been published by Dr. U.P. Shah. The image is partly mutilated. Viṣṇu is sleeping on the coils of the serpent whose seven hoods form a canopy over his head. Only the right hands of the god have survived, the upper one supporting his head as well as the mace and the lower one which holds the lotus. A small stalk issuing from the navel of Viṣṇu suggests the presence of Brahmā.[22]

A very intricately carved figure of Śeṣaśāyī, found from Badoli, is reproduced by R.C. Agrawal. The whole panel is divided into four subsidiary rows. Some of the figures are mutilated and their identification is difficult. The top row represents in all probability the life episodes of different incarnations of Viṣṇu and the third row shows the *āyudha puruṣas* and the demons. The main figure is reclining on the coils of Śeṣa and his head is canopied by a huge snake-hood. The upper left hand of the god holds the disc and the upper right supports the head. The mace is lying by the side of this arm. Both of the lower hands are mutilated. Only the top of the goddess has survived. There are no signs indicating the lotus on the navel of Viṣṇu.[23]

The Kotah Museum has a nice panel depicting the Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. The god is reclining on the serpent bed having the mace, the disc, the conch in his three hands and held probably the lotus in his mutilated right hand. The three-faced Brahmā is seated on the lotus. The mutilated part flanking Brahmā seems to have represented the demons and the *āyudha puruṣas*. The top of the panel shows the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu and the seven *ṛṣis*. Lakṣmī is sitting at the feet of the god.[24] An elegant

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but slightly mutilated image of Śeṣaśāyī is preserved in the Sikar Museum. The god is accompanied by Lakṣmī and probably by Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Navagrahas can be seen in a row on the top.

An image in the Lucknow Museum (No. H. 120) is an interesting piece because Viṣṇu has his head on the left of the panel instead of the right, as in all the other images (Fig. 22).

An elegant image of Śeṣaśāyī has come from Baijanath (Fig. 25).

The 11th century image from Chattarpur in central India is preserved in the Khajuraho Museum. Viṣṇu holds the mace in one of his right hands and his head is resting on the folded upper left hand holding the disc, which is seen to the right of his head. Behind him are seen the attendants and the demons. On the top of the panel are carved the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Below the serpent bed are the conch, the *vedī* being worshipped by some men, and a horse representing probably Hayagrīva.

A very peculiar image has come to light from Bamangola in Malda district, now preserved in the State Archaeological Gallery of Bengal. Viṣṇu is lying on the serpent bed with Lakṣmī shampooing his feet. The only noteworthy feature is that even the goddess is canopied by a serpent hood, which is not seen in any other image so far. The image is datable to the 11th century A.D. (State Arch. Gallery of Bengal No. 5173).

A unique representation of Śeṣaśāyī of the 10th century comes from Orissa. The sculptor has carved the image of Viṣṇu on a circular disc with the spokes around, representing the *cakra*. On the surface of the disc are carved the wavy lines to indicate the ocean or the primaeval waters. It represents Viṣṇu on Ananta, amidst the primaeval waters on the wheel of creation.

These in short are the few representations of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. As already stated above, they do not show any evolution from the iconographical point of view. At the most, what we find is a little elaboration in the representation of the accessory figures. This form was known from an early period and had even migrated to Nepal, as is evident from its image found from that part. It also continued to exist in the later period but never acquired a position to deserve many shrines dedicated to him.

Notes

1. The term has been used to denote all the forms of Viṣṇu associated with Śeṣa, including the Śeṣaśāyī.
2. *Mahābhārata*, III, 194, 8-15.
3. *Jayākhya Saṁhitā* (ed. Bhattacharya, B.), Baroda, 1931, II, 34-36.
4. *Mahābhārata*, XII, 47, 48.
5. *Ibid.*, III, 187, 10.
6. DeSouza, J.P., The Serpent as a symbol of Life and Immortality, *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLIV, Part II, August 1966, p. 441 ff.

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7. *Mahābhārata*, I, 67, 91.
8. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣnuism*, p. 152.
9. Banerji, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, p. 96, Pl. XXXVIII b.
10. Dikshit, M.G., Some Mediaeval Sculptures from the Konkan. *Bulletin of the PWM of Western India*, No. 9, p. 39, Pl. 38.
11. Moti Chandra, Nidhiśṛñga—A study in Symbolism. *Bulletin of the PWM of Western India*, No. 9, p. 24 ff.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
13. *Aparājitapṛcchā*, 219, 40.
14. अनन्तोत्संगसमासीनां दक्षिणपादमाकुञ्च्य वामं प्रसार्य दक्षिणहस्तं तदनोर्ध्वे
संन्यस्य वामहस्तं वामजानूर्ध्वे प्रसार्य चतुर्बाहुं चक्रशंखधरं फणान् पञ्च सप्त वा
छिन्नमौलिनं प्रवालामं सर्वाभरणभूषितं दक्षिणे भृगुं वामे शंकरं तद्रुपं कौतुकं
प्रतिष्ठोक्तक्रमेण प्रतिष्ठां कारयेत् ।

Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 60.

15. Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Madras, 1914, Vol. I, p. I, Pl. XXV, XXX.
16. Danielou Alain, *Hindu Polytheism*, London, 1964, Pl. XI.
17. *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*, V, 86-90.
18. *Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala* 60.
19. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 407, Pl. XXII, and
Vats, *op. cit.* pp. 14-15, Pl. X, b.
Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 110, Pl. XXXII.
20. Annual Administrative Report of the Arch. Dept., Gwalior State, for the year 1932-33, Pl. VI, a.
21. Dikshit, M.G., *Sirpur and rajim Temples*, Pl. 82.
22. Shah, U.P., *Sculptures from Samlaji and Roda*, Pl. 9.
23. Agrawal, R.C., Kishan Vilas, *Marg*, No. XII, Fig. 8.
24. Anand, Mulk Raj, Remnants Stored Against the Ruins, *Marg*, No. XII, Pl. No. 4.

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LAKṢMĪ NĀRĀYAṆA

It is rather surprising that in spite of Lakṣmī being associated with Viṣṇu from an early period, their images in the *āliṅgana-mudrā* or even otherwise are neither referred to in any of the early texts on iconography, nor is any image found prior to the close of the Gupta period. Even the images of Viṣṇu flanked by his consort are not common in that period as already indicated in the chapter on Viṣṇu images.

Lakṣmī, as a goddess of prosperity, was acknowledged from very early period, as evidenced by the images of Gaja-Lakṣmī found from Barhut and other places.[1] Independent images of Lakṣmī have been described in detail by the texts on iconography like *Viṣṇudharmottaram*[2] etc. In the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*[3] she appears as a consort of Viṣṇu forming a pair not only with Viṣṇu but also with Vaikuṇṭha. The sculptural evidences, however, show that she is first associated with the Śeṣa-Nārāyaṇa form of Viṣṇu, and only in the later period her association with Viṣṇu was emphasized.

I

The standing images of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa are very few. Even the Vaiṣṇava *Purāṇas* like the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* or *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* do not describe Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image in detail.

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The *Pārānanda Sūtra*[4] also gives a simple description of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image. "Lord Hari is to be meditated upon as having the human body with dark complexion and wearing yellow garments. He has four hands and is accompanied by Lakṣmī. In his right hands he holds the disc and the mace, and in his left ones, the lotus and the conch. There should be his Garuḍa *vāhana* and the god should be adorned with various ornaments."

The *Viśvakarmāśāstra*[5] quoted by Hemādri, gives an elaborate description of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa accompanied by Siddhi and the other accessory figures. "Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa are to be carved together in their divine forms. On the right is Viṣṇu and on the left Lakṣmī with one of her arms round his neck and the other holding the lotus. She is beautifully modelled and her young body is decked with ornaments. Siddhi is to be represented by her side below the god. The conch and the disc are to be represented in their personified forms as dwarfs with folded hands and are equipped with the *yogapaṭṭa*."[6]

A sculpture from Abaneri in the Amber Museum depicts a beautiful image of standing Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa. Viṣṇu is in the *tribhañga* pose, having four hands, two of which are mutilated. In the two upper hands are held the mace and the disc. His lower right hand is supported on the right shoulder of Lakṣmī. The emblem in the hand of Lakṣmī is not very clear. Two figures with folded hands are seen flanking the main image (Fig. 26).

M.R. Majmudar[7] has published a marble image from Vijapur, little later in date than the one described above, and now being worshipped in a temple. The conch and the disc are placed in the right hands of Viṣṇu, while the attributes in the other two hands are not clear. Lakṣmī, standing to the left of Viṣṇu, embraces him with her right hand, while her other hand holds the lotus. Both of them are adorned with a *vanamālā*.

A standing image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from Manikpur near Allahabad, is in the Allahabad Museum. They have a benign expression on their faces gently looking at each other. Nārāyaṇa holds the mace and the lotus in his right hands, the upper left, resting on the shoulder of Lakṣmī, holds the disc and the lower left holds the conch. The Cakra puruṣa is seen by the side of the god, and a *caurī*-bearer by the side of the goddess. Stylistically more akin to the Khajuraho sculptures, this image is datable to the 11th century A.D. (Fig. 27).

Two standing images of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa of superior artistic merit are in the Parsvanatha and the Laksmana temples at Khajuraho. The image on the wall of the Parsvanatha[8] temple shows Viṣṇu in *dvibhañga* pose with the disc and the conch in his two upper hands. His lower right hand is placed on the mace supported on the ground. He is looking lovingly at Lakṣmī whom he embraces with his lower left arm. Lakṣmī returning his look coyly, embraces him with one hand and in the other hand holds the lotus. Both of them are richly ornamented.

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The other iconographically different figure is on the south wall of the Laksmana temple[9] at Khajuraho. Here, Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa are not embracing each other as in many other images, but they are standing by each other's side with a calm and graceful expression on their faces.

II

The seated images of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa are more popular than the standing ones. The *Skanda Purāṇa* describes Lakṣmī seated to the left of Nārāyaṇa who holds the disc and the conch in his hands, with the other left arm he embraces Lakṣmī.[10]

According to the *Rūpamaṇḍana*, Nārāyaṇa holding his usual emblems and Lakṣmī holding a lotus, should be riding on Garuḍa.[11]

One of the early images known so far has come to light from Pindara datable to the 8th century A.D., and is preserved in collections of the Jamnagar Museum. The image is much mutilated preserving only the figure of Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa with Lakṣmī on his left thigh. Nothing can be said about the emblems.[12]

A small temple of Jayaditya at Nagara, near Cambay has a blue schist image belonging to the early 10th century. The four-handed Nārāyaṇa is seated on a partly mutilated throne, with his consort Lakṣmī on his left thigh. He holds in his right hands the lotus and the mace, the upper left hand which rests on the shoulder of Lakṣmī, holds the conch while the lower left passing delicately round the waist of his consort holds the disc. Lakṣmī embraces her lord with her right arm and in her left hand she holds the lotus. Her head is adorned with a very peculiar type of coiffure. Her right leg is hanging down the throne while the left one is a little tucked up. On top of the sculpture, on either side are seen Śiva and Brahmā (Fig. 29).

The Surya temple and the Sachia Mata temple at Osian also bear the image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Both these images are almost identical in their iconographical details having no peculiarity in particular.[13]

Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa are sometimes flying the Garuḍa also. A 9th c. image in the Srinagar Museum shows Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa flying on Garuḍa. Garuḍa's pot-bellied figure is in human form and his feet are those of a bird. His feathers are serrated in leaf-like pattern, on one of which Viṣṇu supports his feet. Garuḍa holds a pot in his hand, his forehead bears the mark of a serpent head and has a beak-like nose. Viṣṇu holds in his right hands the *padma* and the *Khaḍga* and in his left hands the *cakra* and the *śaṅkha*. Lakṣmī, seated on his left leg between his two left arms, is also holding the lotus and the conch. Both of them are adorned with *vanamālā*, other ornaments and the three peaked tiara (Fig. 28).

Burgess has reproduced an image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa on Garuḍa from Kasara,

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datable to the 11th century A.D. Nārāyaṇa holds in his upper hands the mace and the lotus and his lower left arm embraces his consort.[14] Cousens also refers to an image found from Sejakpur.[15]

Two beautiful images have been noticed from Vijapur in Gujarat. The one in black marble, flying in the temple at Valam, has been published by Mr. M.R. Majmudar.[16] In his right hands, Nārāyaṇa holds the conch and the lotus, the emblem in the upper left hand is not very clear. The lower left arm embraces Lakṣmī.

An image with Lakṣmī placing her hand on her lap was found by U.P. Shah in Navasari district. Viṣṇu has his lower right hand in the *varada-mudrā*, his upper right hand holds the mace, his upper left hand holds the disc above the head of Lakṣmī, probably due to the lack of space, the lower left as in other cases passes round the waist of Lakṣmī.

The Baroda Museum has a marble image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from Khali, near Siddhpur. Nārāyaṇa holds the disc and the mace in his two upper hands. The lower right probably held the conch which is slightly mutilated and the lower left embraces Lakṣmī. These sculptures from Gujarat are specimens of the twelfth century A.D.

A Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image of excellent workmanship in black stone is preserved in the Lucknow Museum. Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa, richly ornamented, are seated on a pedestal with their feet supported by the hands of Garuḍa seated in front. Lakṣmī seated on the left thigh of Nārāyaṇa passes her right arm round his shoulder while her left hand is resting on her lap. Nārāyaṇa holds the mace and the lotus in his two upper hands, his lower left arm embraces his consort and the lower right hand rests on his lap. On either side of the main image on the top are Brahmā and Viṣṇu in *dhyāna-mudrā* flanked by Matsya and Kūrma. The image belongs to the 11th century A.D. (Fig. 30).

A similar image from Gadhwa in U.P., is now in the National Museum. It is an interesting piece in bronze assignable to the 12th century. The main image is accompanied by a number of attendant gods.[17] An image in the Khajuraho Museum with similar iconographical features, is datable to the 11th century A.D.

R.C. Kak refers to an image carved on the Baoli of Dhan on the way from Thara-Kadwal to Kuhn near Basohli. Nārāyaṇa holds in his right hands the mace and the conch and in his left hands he carries the disc and the lotus. Lakṣmī with the end of her scarf over her head, sits on his left knee with folded hands.[18] At Babbur, six miles away from Mansar, in the Kali temple, one of the niches of the north wall contains a slab on which are carved the figures of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī.[19]

Apart from the stylistic varieties there is hardly any iconographic peculiarity

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displayed in these images.

These are the types of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images commonly found in different parts of India. Apart from these, we have a very unique description of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa in the *Śilparatna*. Nārāyaṇa is described here as having eight hands, holding, besides the usual four emblems, *vidyā* (the book), the lotus, the mirror and the golden *kalaśa*.[20]

The use of the expression *ekībhūtam vapuḥ* would suggest that the author of the *Śilparatna* has conceived of a half Lakṣmī and half Nārāyaṇa image after Śiva Ardhanārīśvara. The same text uses the term Ardhāmbikā[21] while describing the Ardhanārīśvara form. Since the author has not specified that the first four symbols are of Nārāyaṇa and the next four of Lakṣmī, it is likely that the author here has in mind an Ardha Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa form.

An image of Ardha Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from chamber has come to light from late mediaeval period. An image datable to the 17th century has been published by Dr. Pal.[22] This image from Nepal has eight hands, holding the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus in the right hands, while in the left holding the book, the lotus, the mirror and the *kalaśa*. Iconographically it tallies exactly with the description of the *Śilparatna*, except for the figures of Garuḍa and the tortoise to the right and the left of the main figure. Dr. Pal also refers to two similar but earlier images, hailing from Nepal.[23] In Nepal, the form seems to have gained popularity in the mediaeval period, but it is very surprising that in India this variety has not been very popular.

Notes

1. Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, pp. 374-75.
2. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 82.
3. *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*, 33, 55-56.
4. *Parānanda Sūtra*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, LIV, 1931, *Sūtra* 19, 37.
5. Hemādri, *Caturvarga Cintāmaṇi*, Calcutta, 1879, *Vratakhaṇḍa*, Pl. I.
6. लक्ष्मीनारायणौकार्यौ संयुक्तौ दिव्यरूपिणौ ।
   दक्षिणस्या विभोर्मूर्तिर्लक्ष्मीर्मूर्तिस्तु वामतः ॥
   दक्षिणः कण्ठलग्नोस्या वामोहस्तः सरोजभृत् ।
   विभोर्वामकरोलक्ष्म्याः कुक्षिभागस्थितः सदा ॥
   .....
   सिध्धिः कार्या समीपस्था चामरग्राहिणी शुभा ।
   कर्त्तव्यं वाहनं सव्ये देवाधोभागगं सदा ॥
   शंखचक्रधरौ तस्य द्वौ कार्यौ पुरुषौ पुरः ।
   वामनो हारकेयूर किरीट मणिभूषणौ ॥
   उपासकौ समीपस्थौ प्रभोर्ब्रह्मशिवात्मकौ ।
   रसनां योगपट व शिखामुञ्जलिमास्थितौ ॥

   Caturvarga Cintāmaṇi, Vrata Khaṇḍa, Part I, pp. 113-4.

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7. Majmudar, M.R., *op. cit.*, p. 48, Pl. II.
8. Auboyer, Jeannine, *Khajuraho*, Plate CLXXI.
9. *Ibid.*, Plate XCIII.
10. शंखचक्रगदापाणिं दिव्यालंकारभूषितम् ।
रत्नपादुकयोः पृष्ठे विन्यस्तचरणाम्बुजम् ॥
व्याकोशपुण्डरीकाक्षं प्रसन्नवदनं विभुम् ।
वामपार्श्वे स्थितां लक्ष्मीं वामेनालिंग्यबाहुना ।
नागवल्लीदलं बद्धमाददानं श्रियाद्भुतम् ॥

Skanda Purāṇa (Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1909) *Vaiṣṇava Khaṇḍa, Puruṣottama Mahātmya*, 5, 8-9.
11. *Rūpamaṇḍana* (*Devatāmūrti Prakaraṇa* and *Rūpamaṇḍana*), Calcutta, 1936, IV, 34-36.
12. Subrahmanyam, R , Pindara and its Antiquities, *JOI*, Vol. XIV, March, 1965, p. 431, fig. XII.
13. Bhandarkar, R.D., The Temples of Osian, *ASIAR*, 1908-09, pp. 106 and 111.
14. Burgess and Cousens, *Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat*, London, 1903, p. 106, Pl. XCI.
15. Cousens, H., *Somanath and Other Mediaeval Temples of Kathiawad*, Calcutta, 1931, p. 58.
16. Majmudar, M.R., Studies in Varieties of Vishṇu Images in Gujarat, *JGRS*, p. 48, Pl. III.
17. Sivarammurti, C., *Indian Bronzes*, Bombay, 1962, Pl. 19.
18. Kak, R.C., Sculptures from Basohli and Ramnagar, *Indian Art and Letters*, Vol. VII, 1933, No. 2, p. 82.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 87, Pl. XV.
20. हस्ते बिभ्रत् सरसिजगदाशंखचक्राणिविद्यां
पद्मादर्शो कनककलशं मेघविद्युद्विलासम् ।
वामोत्तुंगस्तनमविरलाकल्पमा श्लेषलोभा-
देकीभूतं वपुरवतु वः पुण्डरीकाक्षलक्ष्म्योः ॥

Śilparatna, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, Trivandrum, 1929, 23, 23. Also compare *ibid.*, 23, 75.
21. *Ibid.*, 25, 76.
22. Pal, Pratapaditya, Notes on Five Sculptures from Nepal, *British Museum Quarterly*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1-2, p. 32, Pl. XV.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

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VAIKUṆṬHA-CATURMŪRTI

Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti has acquired special importance in the iconography of Viṣṇu due to the deep symbolism of its four faces. Iconographically it is an attempt at synthesizing under the principal form of Viṣṇu, some of his incarnations. The Vyūha theory of the Pāñcarātra symbolically represents Vāsudeva, as the Highest Being, together with his three emanations, i.e. Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Etymologically the meaning of the term Vaikuṇṭha has not been determined so far. However, it may be derived from *vi-kuṇṭha,* meaning 'sharp' or 'not blunt'. It is significant that the earliest references to Vaikuṇṭha do not connect him with Viṣṇu, though in the Epic and the Pauranic texts, it invariably signifies Viṣṇu.

The *Rig-veda,* X, 47-50 are designated as the Indra-Vaikuṇṭha hymns by the commentators. According to some of them, however, Indra-Vaikuṇṭha is the name of the composer of the hymns (!). *Bṛhaddevatā*[1] relates an interesting legend about the birth of Vaikuṇṭha.

It says that Vaikuṇṭha is the son of Vikuṇṭhā, an Āsurī daughter of Prajāpati, who desired to have a son like Indra. She undertook severe penances to attain her desire. Indra himself was thus born of her as Vaikuṇṭha and destroyed the demons.

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In the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*, Vaikuṇṭha is exclusively an epithet of Indra. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[2] identifies Indra-Vaikuṇṭha with *aparājitā senā*—the invincible army and further observes that the one who adheres to him is always triumphant and unconquerable. Almost similar references are found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[3] and in the *Kauśitakī Upaniṣad*.[4]

The *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad* has a significant passage where Indra is identified with the sun and is given different names befitting his position in the firmament.[5] He is called Vaikuṇṭha when the sun is at its zenith at midday. It, therefore, symbolizes the great height, which is equivalent to the *Parama pāda* of Viṣṇu referred to in the *Rig-veda*, which is the highest abode of Viṣṇu and Indra where none other has access. This clearly confirms the concept of Viṣṇu's Vaikuṇṭha form, symbolizing the *Para* aspect of god Viṣṇu.

It is not a matter of surprise that Vaikuṇṭha in the epics and the *Purāṇas* has been correlated with Viṣṇu. Indra and Viṣṇu are closely allied, as Macdonell says, "The closeness of their alliance is indicated by the fact that in the hymns extolling Viṣṇu, Indra is the only deity incidentally associated with him."[6] Viṣṇu is Indra's intimate friend.[7] Viṣṇu strode his three steps by the energy (*ojas*) of Indra.[8] He greatly contributes to Indra's success in his exploits. "He is more than a mere companion, he is *yujyaḥsakhā* (*Rig-veda*, I, 22, 19) equal in rank and power, similar to Indra himself."[9]

Indra recedes into the background in the *Brāhmaṇas* and merges into the personality of the all-pervading Viṣṇu. The fact is amply justified by an interesting story in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.[10] Several gods performed a sacrificial session. They said, "whoever of us shall reach the end of the sacrifice first, shall be the most excellent of us." Viṣṇu first attained that state and therefore he became the highest and the most powerful of gods. Once he took his bow and kept it resting on its end. The bow string was gnawed up by ants and the string thus, springing asunder, cut off the head of Viṣṇu, which fell down and became Sūrya. All the gods then rushed to Viṣṇu, but Indra reaching him first enclosed him in his own self, and gained the possession of Viṣṇu's glory. The sun and Indra together "coincide with, derive their existence or important qualities from Viṣṇu".[11] The identification of both Indra and Viṣṇu with the solar luminary is established,[12] when the concept of Vaikuṇṭha was probably transferred to Viṣṇu when his cult was rising to its height.

In the *Mahābhārata* it is said that Hari took the form of Vaikuṇṭha, the terminator of the blunt.[13] It also refers to Viṣṇu as Vaikuṇṭha in several other places.[14]

According to the *Bṛhaddevatā*, Indra was born of Vikuṇṭhā while in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, it is said that Hari himself was born of Vikuṇṭhā by his own will.[15] The *Bhāgavata* version of the story says that Bhagavān was born of Vikuṇṭhā by his own power, to the wife of Śubhra.[16]

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The Viṣṇu Vaikuṇṭha form is known in the *Mahābhārata*[17] as *Murticatuṣṭaya*, but excepting the indication of four faces, nothing is said about its iconography. The first iconographical reference to the image of Vaikuṇṭha is found in the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*, a Pāñcarātra text, assigned to the Gupta period.[18]

"The Lord, the creator of the universe, is to be meditated upon as having four faces—Vaikuṇṭha (Vāsudeva?), Nṛsiṁha, Varāha and Kapila—and four hands holding *śankha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma*. He is mounted on Garuḍa and is adorned with ornaments and auspicious marks, etc."[19]

The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, another text belonging to the Gupta period,[20] describes the eight-handed variety of the Vaikuṇṭha image.

"Viṣṇu, the god of gods, should be represented as seated on Garuḍa, wearing a celestial yellow garment with *Kaustubha* brightening his bosom and with all sorts of ornaments. His complexion should be like that of a cloud laden with water. He has four faces and eight arms. The eastern face is called Saumya (i.e. placid), southern Narasiṁha, western Kapila and northern Varāha. He wears a *vanamālā* and carries in his right hands the arrow, the rosary and the club, etc., and in his left hands the shield and towel, (*cīra*) and the bow."[21]

Here only six emblems are mentioned, but emending *musalāsayaḥ* for *musalādayaḥ*, *sīram* for *cīram*, and *dhanuścakra* for *dhanuścendram*, the order of all the eight emblems would be as follows : an arrow, a rosary, a club and a sword in the right hands, and a shield, a ploughshare, a bow and a disc in the left hands.[22]

The textual and the iconographical evidence point to the fact that Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti must have originated in the Gupta period. The Nṛsiṁha and the Varāha forms of Viṣṇu dominated in the field of Vaiṣṇavism in that period. The famous Udayagiri Caves representing the colossal Varāha as well as Nṛsiṁha figures, and many other images of Varāha and Nṛsiṁha datable to the Gupta period, attest the strength of the Varāha and the Nṛsiṁha cults. The existence of the cults of Varāha and Nṛsiṁha is further supported by the Tantras bearing the name of Varāha and Nṛsiṁha to whom they are dedicated. For example the *Varāha Pāñcarātra*, *Vārāhi Tantra*, *Nṛsiṁha Tantra* etc. may be mentioned. A temple dedicated to Nṛsiṁha is referred to in the *Vaṁśāvali* of the kings of Kashmir.[23]

In the concept of Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti the only factor that needs a little explanation is the fierce-looking face of Kapila as one of the four faces of the god. The literal meaning of the term *kapila* is red or tawny. We first meet with the word in the *Rig-veda*, X, 27, 16.[24] The context and its meaning are not very clear. Sāyanācārya infers that this *kapila* refers to the famous sage Kapila,[25] but this is definitely a later interpolation and therefore, is not accepted by scholars. Geldner and others believe that there being a reference to ten fingers, Kapila is either Agni or Soma. In the *Rig-veda* it is used as another name of Bṛhaspati or Agni.[26] In

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the *Mahābhārata* also, Kapila is identified with Agni[27] and is also said to have his abode in Āditya, thus identifying him with the sun.[28] This Kapila, originally signifying Agni or the sun, was later identified with the famous Ṛṣi, the founder of the Sānkhya system, who in course of time, came to be regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Kapila is already counted as one of the forms of Vāsudeva in the *Mahābhārata*.[29] The *Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad* which follows the Sānkhya system of philosophy, identifies Kapila, the founder of the Sānkhya system, with *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the Primaeval Egg. It may, therefore, be suggested, as Weber does,[30] that the Pañcarātrins or the Bhāgavatas, who accepted the Sānkhya philosophy, identified him with Vāsudeva.

The whole legend of the sage Kapila burning the sixty thousand sons of king Sagara is elaborated in the *Vana Parvan*.[31] It is said that sixty thousand valiant and arrogant sons of Sagara born of a boon, harassed the people. The gods appealed to Lord Viṣṇu to come to their rescue. At that time king Sagara was performing the horse-sacrifice, and the horse being lost, Sagara asked his sons to search for it. Failing to find the horse on the earth, they started digging the earth and came across a sage, whom they accused of hiding the horse. The sage, out of anger, opened his eyes and the fire emanating from his eyes reduced to ashes all the sixty thousand sons of Sagara.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* also refers to Kapila as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, who saved the earth tortured by the sons of Sagara.[32] The same story is related laconically in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as well.[33] Thus, Kapila, originally representing Agni or Sūrya and a sage in the later time, stands for the fierce aspect of Viṣṇu.[34]

It is very strange that the later *Śilpaśāstras* prescribe the fourth face of the Caturmūrti as that of a woman, instead of Kapila. The emblems prescribed are also a little different from those prescribed by the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*. According to the *Rūpamaṇḍana* the image of Vaikuṇṭha has four heads, those of Puruṣa, Nṛsiṁha, Varāha and woman. In his right hands he holds the mace, the sword, and the discus, while in the left hands he holds the conchshell, the shield, the bow and the lotus.[35]

I

The earliest representation of Vaikuṇṭha or Caturvyūha image is in the Mathura Museum belonging to the Kushana period. The main figure has three busts attached to it, one on the top and the two near the shoulders. The presence of the mace to the right and Balarāma with the serpent hood indicate very definitely the Caturvyūha form (Fig. 31).

Another image of Vaikuṇṭha is preserved in the Mathura Museum.[36] It is a three-headed figure, the central face is human, the right one that of a boar and the left one that of a lion. Two of the four arms are broken and the other two are placed on

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the conchshell and the disc respectively, represented in their personified forms. The *vanamālā* and the *yajñopavīta* hang from his shoulders. The central figure wears a *mukuṭa*. The figure is assigned to the Gupta period, round about the 6th century A.D. The image differs from such other images as the lion, and the boar faces here are to the right and left respectively of the main figure, whereas their position is reversed in other images (Fig. 32).

Almost a similar image of the same date and provenance, is published by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, which he describes as an important document equally of art and iconography.[37] There is an image in the temple of Bajaurain, Chamba having four faces, which according to Dr. Goetz, although assigned to a later date, is a Prathihara copy of the original of the 7th century A.D.[38] A very similar image is in a private collection in Bombay.

In the famous Avantisvami temple of Kashmir, on the floor of the courtyard, not far from the central shrine, in the north-west corner, is an image of Vaikuṇṭha.[39] The central head wears a three-peaked coronet, necklaces, bracelets, etc. The only garment worn is the *dhotī* as is the case with all the Vaikuṇṭha figures. A small sword or dagger is stuck in the belt near the right hip—a feature peculiar to the Vaikuṇṭha images from Kashmir. Between his feet, from the base, rises the goddess Pṛthvī, who is associated with Varāha or even otherwise with Viṣṇu, as his consort. The image has four arms; the upper right and left hands holding the full-blown lotus and the conch respectively. The lower hands rest on the heads of two *caurī*-bearers. Shri Sahani observes, "As is customary with these figures, the demon in question has grinning teeth, protruding tusks and eyes, a short chin and terrific eyebrows. His hair is tied up in a big knot."

The fourth face of Vaikuṇṭha is described by many scholars as "demonical", however, in the light of the explanation of Kapila given above, it is better to call it fierce aspect of Viṣṇu rather than demonical, because there is hardly any reason to connect Viṣṇu, a benign god, with a demon.

Sri Pratapsingh Museum at Srinagar has two beautiful images of Vaikuṇṭha. One fragment (Museum No. A.C. 21) represents the four-handed Vaikuṇṭha with the fourth face carved in a low relief at the back.[40] Fragment No. A.C. 18 in the same Museum,[41] is another such image. Closely resembling the image of Avantipur, is the Saho image, lying in the shrine opposite the temple of Candrasekh at Saho.[42] It is an inscribed stone statue of the height of 1′ 8.5″. The god has three heads. Of the four hands, two rest on the heads of *caurī*-bearers, one of whom holds a fan instead of the *cāmara*. One of the right hands holds a lotus while the left one is broken. The goddess Pṛthvī is shown rising from the base. Behind the *caurī*-bearers stand two other attendants. Brahmā and Śiva are represented at the top on either side of the main figure, while encircling the image are carved the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu.

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There are two standing images of Vaikuṇṭha in the Prince of Wales Museum. One of them is a beautiful stone image, which though partly mutilated, has preserved the graceful bust and the four faces and the minute details of the ornaments. The image has a striking resemblance with an image in Sri Pratapsingh Museum (Museum No. A.C. 18). The front face is human, the right one that of Nṛsiṁha and the left one that of Varāha. The back face is of fierce-looking Kapila, wearing the *jaṭā*, indicative of his being a *ṛṣi*, with widely open eyes (Fig. 33). The front three faces are adorned with a three-peaked coronet. Behind the front three faces are the traces of lotus petals indicating possibly a halo. The image must have been four-handed, holding the usual emblems of Viṣṇu, all of which are broken.

The second figure though smaller than the above-mentioned image, rivals it in the finish of the modelling and the delicate treatment of ornaments. In most of the details, it is very similar to the previous one. The four heads of Vaikuṇṭha image are preserved but all the four hands are completely broken, the only garment worn is the *dhotī* as usual.

The presence of a small dagger attached to the belt on the right side, indicates their Kashmir origin. Very probably, the two images described above are from Avantipur as they bear striking resemblance to the group of images from that region. On the stylistic grounds they could be assigned to the 9th century A.D.

In the Harihara temple at Ballaur in Basohli, there is an image of Vaikuṇṭha, preserving three heads and the bust.[43] The fragment is very similar in style to the 9th century Vaikuṇṭha images of Kashmir.

An 11th century image of four-handed Vaikuṇṭha, placing his hands on two *āyudha puruṣas* has come to light from Jhajjar (Fig. 34).

II

Most of the stone images just described are the standing images of Vaikuṇṭha. The seated images of Vaikuṇṭha are also not unknown, though they are rare. An image from Verinag in the Srinagar Museum shows three-faced Viṣṇu seated on the Garuḍa who is standing in the *namaskāra-mudrā*. The right and the left faces are those of the boar and the lion respectively. The upper two hands hold the disc and the sword, the remaining right hand probably holds the mace and the left holds the conch. Four female figures, probably two goddesses and two *caurī*-bearers, are inset in the leaf-like feathers of Garuḍa. Two figures flanking Garuḍa are not identified. The image is a beautiful specimen of the 9th century (Fig. 35). There is a very peculiar image of Vaikuṇṭha in the Prince of Wales Museum, published by Barrett,[44] though the description of the image given by him suffers from several inaccuracies. The four-faced haloed image is seated on Garuḍa on a square pedestal with a full-blown lotus which appears like *Śrī-cakra* or *Śrī-yantra*. The small water spout attached to the base is meant to drain the lavation (*Abhiṣeka*) water. He holds in his lower and upper right hands the lotus and the sword res-

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pectively, and in the lower and the upper left hands the conch and the disc, which is partly mutilated. The dagger that is generally stuck in the belt of the Vaikuṇṭha images, in accordance with the injunction of the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*[15] is here placed in the hands of the deity. The fourth face representing Kapila is very fierce-looking. Instead of wearing the *jaṭā* which is generally the case, he wears a *mukuṭa*. Garuḍa is also four-handed, two of which hold a *pūrṇa ghaṭa* and the other two support the feet of Vaikuṇṭha. There are four female figures two on the either side of the god seated on the serrated leaf-like feathers of Garuḍa. Three similar stylised feathers are joined to the base, just to keep up the balance of the whole figure (Figs. 37, 38).

The identification of the four female figures is problematic. The upper figures may be his consorts, as the emblems in their hands seem to be lotuses. The Vaikuṇṭha image with his two consorts is described in the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā* where he is supposed to be accompanied by Śrī and Bhūmi, but the other two figures cannot be explained.

A stone slab from Himgiri in the Bhuri Singh Museum (No. A. 35),[46] Chamba, represents a three-faced god seated on his mount Garuḍa. The image has four hands, two of which hold a wheel and a conch. The other two hands are placed on the heads of miniature attendants, who hold fly-whisks (Fig. 36).

A mutilated image of three-faced Vaikuṇṭha is preserved in the sanctum of the Laksmana temple[47] at Khajuraho, apparently belonging to the middle of the 10th century A.D. The image seems to have had four arms, all of which are broken now. The existence of such image in the sanctum of a magnificent temple like the Laksmana temple, is sufficient to indicate that the worship of the Vaikuṇṭha form of Viṣṇu was prevalent in the Chandela country in the 10th century.

The form of the deity, after remaining constant for a long time, was changed and elaborated, in about the eleventh century, resulting in the creation of the new iconographical forms.

III

Vaikuṇṭha, so far only occasionally associated with his attendants, is accompanied now, by his consort Lakṣmī, who sits on his left thigh, as in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images. This form is described in the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā* as Lakṣmī-Vaikuṇṭha.[48] An image of Vaikuṇṭha in the Bhuri Singh Museum[19] (No. A. 9) found from Devi Kothi at Bera Paragana, shows Vaikuṇṭha seated on his vehicle with Lakṣmī who is seated on his left knee. He has three faces and seems to have had four hands holding his usual attributes. The image is interesting as it bears a small inscription at the base, which records that the image was made by the order of Rana Naga Pala who lived in the middle of the 12th century A.D. The image is named Nārāyaṇa.

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There have been definite attempts at synthesizing Vaikuṇṭha with other prevalent forms of Viṣṇu. In the centre of the middle row of the enormous Salahi Fountain slab at Chamba, dated 1170 A.D., the artist has tried to combine the Vaikuṇṭha and Śeṣaśāyī forms of Viṣṇu.[50] Viṣṇu is reclining on the Śeṣa, holding his hands in the *añjali-mudrā*. Viṣṇu here has three faces, instead of the one normal face, the additional faces being those of Nṛsiṁha and Varāha. But for this peculiarity, the rest of the features of this image are the same as that of the Śeṣaśāyī images. This iconographical form might have been popular in Kashmir and Chamba, as this form is alluded to in the *Rājatarañgiṇī*.[51]

In the Markula Devi temple at Markula, Udaipur, at Lahul at Chamba, the relief on the eastern side of the balcony window, represents the Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu, with a deliberate attempt to synthesize it with the Vaikuṇṭha form. The standing god with left leg extended to reach Brahmā in heaven and with his right leg reaching the nether world, has three faces as in the Vaikuṇṭha form. The relief is decorated with various incidents in the story of Vāmana.[52]

One of the main features in the process of elaborating these images is the multiplication of attributes and hands. The hands multiply from four to eight, twelve, sixteen and even twenty. When these forms were accepted by the orthodox worshippers they were iconographically classified under different heads, according to the number of hands and the order of attributes held by the deity, the difference being only a minor one. We, thus, find some of them described in later Śilpaśāstras belonging to the fifteenth century or even later. The *dhyānas* however do not tally with each other.

An image of Vaikuṇṭha with eight hands is found from Gujarat.[53] This unpublished image is lying in the temple of Siddhanatha Mahadeva, at Sandera. It has three faces, on the right side is the face of Nṛsiṁha and on the left is the face of Varāha. Of the eight hands, the upper right holds the mace and the lower right is in the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*. The upper left hand holds a staff and the bow. The rest of the hands are broken. The image belongs to the 9th century A D. At Khajuraho, on the back inner wall of the Kandaria Mahadeva temple, assigned to the 11th century, there is an image of three-faced Viṣṇu with eight hands, out of which only two holding the disc and the lotus have survived.[51] A 9th century image from the Jhalawar Museum is a beautiful specimen of the eight-handed Vaikuṇṭha. The deity is seated on Garuḍa who assumes a completely human form. The three right hands hold an arrow, the mace and the sword whereas the fourth one is in the *varada-mudrā*. In the left hands are placed the shield, the disc, the bow and the conch. The Śankha Puruṣa and the Cakra Puruṣa are flanking Garuḍa (Fig. 39).

The ten-handed variety of Vaikuṇṭha image is carved on a niche of the Sasbahu temple at Nagda, datable to the late 10th or 11th century. Out of the four surviving right hands, three hold the mace, the goad and the thunderbolt and the

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emblem of the fourth is unidentifiable. The left hands have the noose, the disc, the bow, the *kamaṇḍalu* and the conch (Fig. 40).

The twelve-handed variety is designated Ananta by some of the Śilpaśāstra texts.[55] It is mentioned that in the right hands of the god should be placed the mace, the dagger, the disc, the thunderbolt, the goad, the arrow, and in the left hands the conchshell, the shield, the bow, lotus, the staff and the noose. He should be seated on Garuḍa and his four faces represent a man, a lion, a woman and a boar.

Goetz refers to a twelve-handed figure of Viṣṇu with three faces, lying in the Laksana Devi temple at Brahmor in Chamba.[56] Many of the hands are broken but on the basis of the attributes that have survived, it is possible to identify it with the Ananta form of Viṣṇu. It is remarkable that the fourth right and left hands are placed on the attendants.

Another variety of Vaikuṇṭha with sixteen hands called Trailokyamohana also has the four usual heads. The emblems in the right hands are : mace, disc, goad, arrow, lance, disc and the *varada-mudrā*. In the left hands are : club, noose, bow, conchshell, lotus, *kamaṇḍalu*, the horn, and the natural hands are to be held in the *yoga-mudrā*. He is seated on his Garuḍa.

The twenty-handed images, with the front faces like those of the Ananta form, represent the Viśvarūpa form of Viṣṇu. The right hands hold the banner, the conch-shell, the ploughshare, the thunderbolt, the goad, the arrow, the disc, the *bijoru* (citron fruit), and the last hand should be in the *varada-mudrā*. In the left hands the deity holds the standard, the staff, the noose, the mace, the bow, the lotus, the horn, the pestle and the rosary. The natural hands are in the *yoga-mudrā*.

Images with multiple hands, belonging to the period between the 12th and the 15th century, have been found from northern Gujarat, which need not be described here.[57] It may only be remarked in passing that the ten-handed variety, found in Gujarat, is not described in the texts, and that the Trailokyamohana form must have been worshipped and patronized by the Vaiṣṇavas of Gujarat from the 12th to the 15th century A.D.

IV

A brief reference may also be made here of another unique form of Viṣṇu which evolved side by side with these forms, designated by scholars as Mahā-Viṣṇu, Viśvarūpa, etc. It seems plausible that not satisfied with the four heads of Vaikuṇṭha image, the sculptor strove to synthesize all the possible concepts and forms of Viṣṇu, to represent him as the centre of the universe. Besides the three heads of Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti there are likewise found images with many heads carved in the round, around the central face. The images are also multi-handed.

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A mutilated image in the Mathura Museum represents Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa (Fig. 41).[58] An image of this type has been found from Kanauj also. The main image is surrounded by several figures like eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, Balarāma, Indra, Sarasvati, etc. The *nāgas* at the bottom flanking or supporting his feet indicate the nether world. The heads of Nṛsiṁha, Varāha, the horse and probably the tortoise are attached to the head of Viṣṇu. The main figure is eight-handed holding in his left hands the shield, the disc, the dagger and the conchshell. One of the right hands is broken, two of them hold the sword and the mace and the upper one is in the *abhaya-mudrā*.

From Baijanath in Kumaon also a magnificent image, very similar in style to that of Kanauj, has been discussed at length by K.P. Nautiyal.[59] The eight-handed image is standing on the hands of the earth goddess who is sitting between his feet. The entwined nāgas are placed at either end of the pedestal in *namaskāra-mudrā*. The god shows *abhaya-mudrā*, sword, mace and some unidentifiable object in the right hands, and shield, disc, bow and the conch in the left hands. Two *āyudha puruṣas* flank him. Just over his *mukuṭa* is Hayagrīva and the rest of the images hold lotuses in their hands (Fig. 42). A similar image from M.P. is preserved in the Gwalior Museum (Fig. 44). Two images, described by Dr. U.P. Shah, hailing from Samalaji in Gujarat[60] are equally interesting (Fig. 43). All these images have retained the most peculiar character of the Vaikuṇṭha image—the lion and the boar face attached to the main human face of the figure.

It is significant that a number of three or four-faced images have been found from Kashmir and north-western part of India, earlier than the 10th century, indicating the worship of Viṣṇu in the Vaikuṇṭha form. It seems that the form originated in the Gupta period, and then became the centre of an important cult from the 8th to the 10th century A.D. Installation of such Vaikuṇṭha images is incidentally referred to in the *Rājatarañgiṇī*,[61] where it is designated Caturātman. The installation of such images is also sometimes mentioned in the inscriptions as the Saho image inscription of Chamba indicates. The Vaikuṇṭha cult seems to have received the patronage of Avantivarman of Kashmir as many of the Vaikuṇṭha images are found in the temples built during his reign. It seems that the popularity of Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti is due to the strength of Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir and adjacent regions. The *Rājatarañgiṇī* alludes to kings partronizing various Vaiṣṇavite cults by building the temples of those deities An image of Viṣṇu Jayasvāmin was consecrated by king Pravarasena II[62] who lived in the 6th century A.D. King Durlabhasvāmin consecrated the shrine of Viṣṇu.[63] The illustrious king Lalitāditya was a staunch worshipper of Viṣṇu. Thus Viṣṇu cult which enjoined the worship of his various incarnations must have been very popular. Among the incarnations of Viṣṇu, Nṛsiṁha and Varāha acquired special importance. Installation of the Nṛsiṁha images is referred to in the *Rājatarañgiṇī*.[64] Grants were also dedicated in honour of Nṛsiṁha as testified by the Yugakara copper plate grant from Chamba.[65] The temple dedicated to Nṛsiṁha is referred to in the *Vaṁśāvali* of the Kashmirian kings, as mentioned above. The cult of Varāha was also patronized by the kings of

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north-western India. Installation of a magnificent Varāha image is alluded to in the *Rājatarañgiṇī*.[66] The great king Mihira Bhoja had even issued the Ādi Varāha coins.[67] Varāhamūla, mentioned in the *Rājatarañgiṇī*,[68] also shows that Varāha was one of the most favourite deities of that period.

It is noteworthy that the back face of the Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti—the Kapila face, is carved in the images in Kashmir, with the only exception of an image from Varanasi.[69] That the concept of Kapila is emphasized in the Caturmūrti at Kashmir is also apparent in the texts of Kashmirian origin such as the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*[70] and the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*.[71] It seems possible that the conception of the fierce countenance of Kapila was a local or regional trait which did not go beyond Kashmir and the adjacent regions. The fact that Kapila must have acquired an important position in north-western India is also supported by the legend that the Kapilāśrama—a sacred place named after the great episode of the sage Kapila, described above existed near the foothill of the Himalayas.[72]

Taking into consideration all these points one may suggest that the Vaikuṇṭha form of Viṣṇu probably originated in Kashmir. It may also be pointed out that Kashmir was also the place of the origin of the *Pāñcarātra* theory and the *vyūha* concept,[73] which prepared a solid base for the symbolism of the Vaikuṇṭha Caturmūrti. Though the form must also have existed in the plains, for the earliest known images of Vaikuṇṭha hail from Mathura, a great centre of art and religion in the Gupta period, where possibly new iconographic forms evolved.

The consort of Vaikuṇṭha does not seem to have acquired much importance. Of all the *Pāñcarātra* texts only *Jayākhya Saṁhitā* enjoins her worship.[74] An image found from Bijolya represents the consort of Vaikuṇṭha.[75] She is represented like Vaikuṇṭha with three faces, but the front face, instead of being human, is that of a horse, indicating the Hayagrīva form of Viṣṇu. It is merely due to the influence of Hayagrīva worship in Rajasthan from where this image is found.[76]

Notes

1. *Bṛhaddevatā*, (ed.) Macdonell, A.A, Harward Oriental Series, 1904.
   प्रजापत्यासुरी त्वासीद् विकुण्ठा नाम नामतः ।
   सेच्छन्तीन्द्रसमं पुत्रं तेपेऽथ समुहत्तपः ॥
   सा प्रजापतितः कामांल् लेमेऽथ विविधान् वरान् ।
   तस्यां चेन्द्रः स्वयं जज्ञे जिघांसुर्दैत्य दानवान् ॥
   VII, 49-50.
   See also Yāska's *Nirukta*, VII, 2. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on the *Rig-veda*, X, 47 also relates the same story.
2. इन्द्रो वैकुण्ठो पराजिता सेनेति वा अहमेतमुपास इति ।
   स च य एवमुपासते जिष्णुर्हापराजिष्णुर्भवत्यन्यतस्य जायी ॥
   Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, II, i, 6.
3. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 14, 5, 1, 6.
4. *Kauśitakī Upaniṣad*, IV, 7.

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5. स वा एष इन्द्रो वैमृध उद्यन् भवति सविता, उदितो मित्रः, संगवकाले
इन्द्रः, वैकुण्ठो मध्यन्दिने.....

Jaiminīya Upaniṣad, IV, 10, 10.

6. Macdonell, A.A., *Vedic Mythology*, Benaras, 1963, p. 39.
7. *Rig-veda*, I, 22.
8. *Ibid.*, VIII, 12.
9. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 1954, p. 32.
10. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 14, 1, 1, 1, ff.
11. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
12. In the *Rig-veda*, IV, 26, Indra says that he was Śurya ; in II, 30, he receives the epithet of Śurya.
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I, 6, 18 identifies Indra with the sun. Indra and Viṣṇu both are Ādityas in the *Mahābhārata*.
इन्द्रो विवस्वान्पूषा च त्वष्टा च सविता तथा ।
पर्जन्य चैव विष्णु च आदित्यो पावकार्चिषः ॥

Mahābhārata, I, 114, 55-56.

13. पुराहेयष हरिर्भूत्वा वैकुण्ठो कुण्ठसायकः ।
सुरासुरानवस्फूर्जन्नब्रवीत्के जयन्त्विति ॥

Mahābhārata, VI, 775, 15.

14. *Ibid.*, I, 58, 49; III, 100, 17; XII, 43, 5.
15. चाक्षुषे चान्तरे देवो वैकुण्ठः पुरुषोत्तमः ।
वैकुण्ठायामसौ जज्ञे वैकुण्ठैर्देवतैः सह ॥

Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III, 1, 41.
Also compare *Kūrma Purāṇa*, Calcutta, 1890, 1, 51, 32.

16. पत्नी विकुण्ठा शुभ्रस्य वैकुण्ठैः सुरसत्तमैः ।
तयोः स्वकलया जज्ञे वैकुण्ठो भगवान्स्वयम् ॥

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII, 5, 3.

17. *Mahābhārata*, XII, 326, 43.
18. *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, LIV, p. 34. The text belongs to the middle of the 5th century A.D., according to Dr. Bhattacharya.
19. अनादिनिधनं देवं जगत्स्रष्टारमीश्वरम् । ध्यायेच्चतुर्भुजं विप्र शंखचक्रगदाधरम् ॥
चतुर्वक्त्रं सुनयनं सुकान्तं पद्मपाणिनम् । वैकुण्ठं नरसिंहास्यं वाराहं कपिलाननम् ॥
शुक्लं खगेश्वरारूढं सर्वाभरणभूषितम् । सर्वलक्षणसंपन्नं माल्याम्बरधरं विभुम् ॥
किरीटकौस्तुभधरं कर्पूरालिप्तविग्रहम् । सूर्यायुतसहस्राभं सर्वदेवनमस्कृतम् ॥

Jayākhya Saṁhitā, Gaekwad Oriental Series, *Paṭala*, 6, Śl. 73-76.

20. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, Vol. I, Introduction, p. XVI.
21. देवदेवं तथा विष्णुं कारयेद्गरुडस्थितम् ॥
कौस्तुभोद्भासितोरस्कं सर्वाभरणधारिणम् ।
सजलाम्बुदसच्छायं पीतदिव्याम्बरं तथा ॥
मुखाश्च कार्याचत्वारो बाहवो द्विगुणास्तथा ।
सौम्यं तु वदनं पूर्वं नारसिंहं तु दक्षिणम् ॥
कापिलं पश्चिमं वक्त्रं तथा वाराहमुत्तरम् ।
तस्य दक्षिणहस्तेषु बाणाक्षमुसलादयः ॥
चर्म चीरं धनुश्चेन्द्रं चापेषु (वामेषु ?) वनमालिनः ।

Ibid., III, 44, 9-13.

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22. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Vol. II, p. 141, footnote 1.
23. Vogel, J. Ph., *Antiquities of Chamba State*, Calcutta, 1911, Part I, p. 85, Śl. 45.
24. दशानामेकं कपिलं समानं तं हित्वन्ति क्रतवे पर्याय ।
गर्भः माता सुधितं वक्षणस्व वैनन्तं तुषयन्ती बिभर्तिः ।
Rig-veda, X, 27, 16.
25. Sāyaṇa : 25.
कपिलं एतन्नामानं तं प्रसिद्धमृषिम् ।
26. Geldner, *Der Rig-veda*, Vol. III, London, 1951.
"Man wird zuñächt mit Oldenberg an die Finger und entsprechen bei Kapilam an Agni oder Soma denken....Im Rig-veda, Mag er ein anderer Name fur Brhaspati oder Agni sein."
ad. *Rig-veda*, X, 27, 16.
27. अग्निः स कपिलो नाम सांख्ययोग प्रवर्तकः ॥
Mahābhārata, III, 211, 21.
28. *Ibid* , III, 3, 181.
29. *Ibid*., III, 106, 2.
30. Weber, A., *Indische Studien*, Berlin, 1850, V. I, p. 433.
31. *Mahābhārata*, III, 105 and 106.
32. *Rāmāyaṇa*, ed. Bhatt, G.H., Oriental Institute, Baroda, I, 39, 26-28.
33. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1910, IV, 4, 5-22.
34. ततः क्रुद्धो महाराज कपिलो मुनिसत्तमः ।
वासुदेवेति यं प्राहुः कपिलं मुनिसत्तमम् ॥
स चक्षुर्विवृतं कृत्वा तेजस्तेषु समुत्सृजन् ।
ददाह समुहातेजा मन्दबुद्धीन्स सागरान् ॥
Mahābhārata, III, 106, 2-3.
35. वैकुण्ठं तु प्रवक्ष्यामि सोऽष्टबाहुर्महाबलः ।
तार्क्ष्यासनश्चतुर्वक्त्रः कर्त्तव्यशान्तिमिच्छता ॥
गदां खड्गं शरं चक्रं दक्षिणे स्याच्चतुष्टयम् ।
शंखं खेटं धनुः पद्मं वामे दद्याच्चतुष्टयम् ॥
अग्रतः पुरुषाकारं नारसिंहं च दक्षिणे ।
अपरं स्त्रीमुखाकारं वाराहस्य तथोत्तरम् ॥
Rūpamaṇḍana, III, 52-54.
Also compare *Aparājitapṛcchā*, *Sūtra* 219, 25-26. Here the fourth face is called *Śrīmukha*.
36 Vogel, J. Ph., *Catalogue of Archaeological Museum, Mathura*, Allahabad, 1910, p. 100.
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COMPOSITE IMAGES

The evolution of the composite images is rooted in the tendency of the Hindus to revere all the gods as of equal importance. The theory of Henotheism propounded by Max Müller explains that in the hymns of the *Rig-veda* different gods are considered to be the highest gods on different occasions. In the *Mahābhārata* also sometimes Viṣṇu is praised as the Highest God and sometimes Rudra or Śiva. It is this spirit of tolerance which considers all the gods as of equal rank that must have inspired the concept of a composite figure, where the gods are not only placed on an equal footing but are also synthesized into one.

At the close of the formative period of Brahmanism, the two great cults that evolved and expanded were Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, with Viṣṇu and Śiva or Rudra as their godheads. Hence, the earliest synthesis of religions that we come across is between these two cults, reflected in the composition of the two godheads.

The composite form of the two gods was already known as early as the time of the *Mahābhārata* (if the relevant portion is genuine). Arjuna, after completing his course of penances, addresses a hymn to Śiva where he also mentions his composite form with Hari as Harirudra.[1] Sculptural evidence also justifies that the Harihara form was worshipped as early as the Kushana period.

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I

Very few texts on iconography and religion describe the Harihara image. A complete description of Harihara is however found in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[2] "In the image the left side is occupied by Mādhava (Viṣṇu) and the right side by Śiva. Both the arms of Kṛṣṇa are adorned with diamond bracelets and he holds the conchshell and disc or mace, wears a yellow garment and is fully ornamented. The right half of the head wears *jaṭāmukuṭa* and is adorned by the crescent. He wears a serpent bracelet on his right arm. One of the right hands is held in the *varada-mudrā* and the other holds a trident. His *Yajñopavīta* consists of serpents and his lower garment is made up of skin.

The *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa* also gives almost the same description of the Śiva-Nārāyaṇa image.[3] It is surprising that it describes separately the Harihara image which does not differ much from the Śiva-Nārāyaṇa image.[4]

The right half of the image is Śiva, fair in colour; one of the hands is in the *varada-mudrā* and the other holds a trident. The left represents Hṛṣikeśa, blue in colour, holding the *cakra* and the *padma* in his hands. Nandi, the mount of Śiva, is to be carved on the right side and Garuḍa, the mount of Viṣṇu, is to be carved on the left. Besides these the image of Kṛṣṇa-Śankara is also thought of in the same but iconographically, there is no difference excepting a rosary instead of the *varada-mudrā* in one of the hands of Śiva.[5]

The earliest images of Harihara known so far could be traced back as early as the Kushana period. Two heads have been discovered from the Girdharpur Tila near Mathura, now in the collection of the Mathura Museum (No. 1333 and 1336). The upper portion of the heads is divided into two halves. The *jaṭāmukuṭa* on the right side represents Śiva, while the *mukuṭa* on the left represents Viṣṇu.[6]

One of the early images of Harihara is preserved in the collection of the Allahabad Museum, on a square stone (No. 292) depicting Varāha, Viṣṇu, Vāmana and Harihara on its four sides. Though the image is worn out there are clear traces of the *jaṭābhāra* and the *kaupīna* of Śiva on the right and the *mukuṭa* and the *pītāmbara* of Viṣṇu on the left, indicating it to be a Harihara image. The emblems held by them are not very clear but it seems that Śiva held a trident and his other hand was in the *abhaya* or *varada-mudrā*. Viṣṇu perhaps held the disc and the conch-shell or mace in his hands. Below on the right side, *triśūla* is represented in its personified form and on the left is *cakra* also as an *āyudha puruṣa*. The image belongs to the 5th century A.D.

Another much better specimen of Gupta art is in the Patna Museum (Fig. 45). As usual, the right side represents Hara and the left Hari. Śiva holds a trident and a rosary. The end of the trident rests on the head of a squatting figure evidently representing the Triśūla-puruṣa. Viṣṇu holds the conchshell in his lower right hand

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and the upper hand rests on the head of a figure who in all probability is Cakra Puruṣa.

The mediaeval period has produced some very fine images of Harihara. A 9th century panel in the same museum, carved on both sides, represents Viṣṇu of the Trivikrama kind on one and Harihara on the other. The right pair of hands holds a trident and the rosary and the left holds the disc and the mace. The trident and mace are represented in their personified forms also. There are two other attendant figures, probably representing devotees. On the pedestal appear Nandi and Garuḍa.

An elegant image of Harihara, belonging to 9th century, is in the private collection of the Mahant of Bodh Gaya. All the iconographical features of Śiva and Viṣṇu are there in minutest detail. Below the *jaṭā* near the right ear is a snake with its tail curved into a circle, the bracelet has a human skull in the middle and the loin cloth is made of skin. The upper right hand holds a trident and a rosary and is in the *varada-mudrā*. The left side head wears a *kirīṭa mukuṭa*, the *vanamālā* hangs down the shoulders and *pītāṁbara* serves as the lower garment. The upper hand holds the disc and the lower hand holds the conchshell. There are two small figures flanking the main image who are either attendants or the *āyudha-puruṣas*. On the pedestal appears Nandi to the right of the lotus supporting the main image, and Garuḍa in human form is to the left (Fig. 46).

The State Museum, Lucknow, has a similar image datable to the ninth century. Iconographically, however, it is not of much interest. Śiva on the right holds trident and a rosary in the hands, raised in *abhaya-mudrā* instead of the *varada-mudrā* as in the images described above. Viṣṇu on the left holds the disc and the conchshell. The distinguishing marks of Śiva and Viṣṇu appear, as also the Nandi and Garuḍa, near the feet. Two *āyudha-puruṣas* are also represented as usual.

Similar specimens from eastern India may be referred to here in brief. A much mutilated Harihara datable to the 9th century is found from Burdwan and is preserved in the collection of the Asutosh Museum. A colossal image of the 11th century is lying in the collection of the Indian Museum (No. A 24125).

No early image of Harihara has come to light from western India so far. On the eastern wall of the Harihara temple II at Osian, near Jodhpur, there is an image of Harihara holding trident in one of the right hands and the other is posed in the *abhaya-mudrā* and is having the disc and the conchshell in the left hands. Besides the *jaṭāmukuṭa*, the third eye appears on the forehead. The *kaupīna* and the *pītāṁbara* are worn on the waist as usual. A long garland reaching upto the knees represents *vanamālā* on the left side and skull garland on the right. The Triśūla Puruṣa and Nandi overhead indicate the presence of Śiva and Śankha Puruṣa that of Viṣṇu. Garuḍa is conspicuous by its absence.[7]

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An almost identical image datable to the same period has come to light from Roda.[8] Though the image is much mutilated it has retained some characteristic features of Harihara. The upper right hand holds the trident and the lower right is probably in the *varada-mudrā*. The upper left hand holds the disc and the lower one is akimbo. There are two attendant figures flanking the main image. No other accessory figure or even their mounts are visible. An elegant image of Harihara belonging to the 11th c. has come to light from Rajasthan (Fig. 47).

It is evident from the descriptions of several images of Harihara from northern India that the image did not undergo much evolution from the iconographical point of view. The emblems held by them as well as the position of Śiva and Viṣṇu remain unchanged. In the later period with the growing tendency for elaboration, some further details such as the third eye of Śiva, the *vanamālā* and *muṇḍamālā* and also their respective vehicles were added. Harihara seems to have been favoured more in U.P. and eastern India judging from the number of images that have been found from those parts.

It is doubtful whether this attempt to synthesize these two prominent religions resulted into a new cult. The known images of Harihara do not seem to have been worshipped. Excepting the Harihara temple at Osian there is hardly any reference to a shrine installed in his name.[9] Still, the existence of Harihara images almost everywhere in northern India suggests that there must have been people who adored this composite form in a spirit of tolerance and syncretism.

II

Sometimes Viṣṇu is joined with Sūrya in the place of Śiva. Texts on iconography do not refer to this Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa image, but a six-handed figure in the Jhalawar Museum shows the combination of the two. Four of the hands hold the usual emblems of Viṣṇu, while the other two hands hold lotuses indicating Sūrya, who also wears full boots. A very peculiar feature of the image is the snake-hood around the head, which signifies Viṣṇu accompanied by Śeṣa (Fig. 50).

Later on an attempt was made to synthesize the Hindu Trinity into one image. The deity known as Harihara-pitāmaha has four faces and six hands, holding the rosary, the trident and the mace in the right hands and the *kamaṇḍalu*, the *khatvāñga* and the disc in the left hands.[10]

A six-handed composite image has come to light from Unza in Saurashtra from the wall of a pond. The three-faced god is seated on Garuḍa, indicating Viṣṇu to be the main deity. He holds in his right hands a disc, a *kamaṇḍalu*, and a rosary and in his left hands he holds the conchshell, the serpent and the trident.[11]

Cousens has published a similar image from Than in Muni Bava's temple.[12] The central figure seems to be that of Brahmā as attested by the rosary and the

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kamaṇḍalu held in the main two hands.

At times Sūrya is also blended with this Trimurti,[13] thus combining all the prominent contemporary cults except the Śākta. The image variously known as Hariharahiraṇyagarbha or Sūryahariharapitāmaha displays all the iconographic characteristics of Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā. According to the *Devatāmūrti-prakaraṇa*[14] the image combining the four gods into one, should have four faces and eight hands. Sūrya, indicated by the front face, should hold a lotus in either hand, Rudra on the right side should hold the *khatvāñga* and the trident, Brahmā on the back should hold a rosary and the *kamaṇḍalu*, and Viṣṇu on the left should hold the conch and the disc. The *Aparājitapṛcchā*[15] also describes the image in the same manner.

The Sikar Museum has a three-faced standing image. The four pairs of hands signify the four deities. The lowermost pair holds rosary and is in the *varada-mudrā* to the right and the *kamaṇḍalu* to the left. The second pair holds a lotus in each hand, the symbol of Sūrya. The third pair of hands for Viṣṇu holds the disc and the conch-shell and uppermost with trident and the snake signifies Śiva. Besides these, the goose and the horse on the left side of the pedestal and the Nandi and Garuḍa on the right side indicate the presence of the four deities.[16]

A fine specimen of the same type of composite image has come to light from the Udayesvara temple, at Udaipur.[17] It is a standing eight-handed image, three of whose hands are already mutilated. The hands on the right side hold the trident, the lotus, the conchshell, and the rosary, one of them is in *varada-mudrā*. On the left only the disc is preserved. The principal deity in this image is Sūrya, as described by the texts.

Similar images of Hariharahiraṇyagarbha may also be seen in the Khajuraho group of temples.

The Laksmana temple, Khajuraho has such an image in the panel of a small shrine situated to its south-east. It is a colossal image, 9 ft. in height, having three faces and eight hands. The full boots and the lotus in either hand in front indicate Sūrya to be the main deity in the composition. The three extra hands on the right hold the trident, the rosary, the third being in *varada-mudrā*; the left hands hold the snake, the conchshell, and the *kamaṇḍalu*. The emblems of Viṣṇu here are *varada-mudrā* and the conchshell instead of the disc and the conchshell. A goddess is seen in front of the main image as the *dvārapālas* flank the main image.[18]

On the *Śikhara* of the Visvanatha temple also is preserved a similar three-faced image, wearing an armour, boots and ornaments. The main deity is again Sūrya as in the image described above, as the main hands are holding the lotuses. The rest of the right hands hold the rosary, the trident and the conchshell whereas the left hands

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hold the *kamaṇḍalu*, the snake and the disc. The goddess, the *dvārapālas* and the other accessory figures are also present.

The Javari and the Citragupta temples also have images of the same kind but are slightly mutilated.

Seated images of Hariharahiraṇyagarbha are also known. The Jhalawar Museum has a fine composite seated image. The three-faced and eight-handed composite deity is mounted on Garuḍa, indicating that the main god here is Viṣṇu. The Haṁsa and Nandi are carved below the Garuḍa. Iconography of the image is the same as in the standing images. The emblems of the lowermost pair of hands are indicative of Brahmā but the right hand is shown in *abhaya-mudrā*, instead of holding the rosary. The second pair holding a lotus in either hand and the boots indicate Sūrya, the third pair of Viṣṇu's hands is mutilated, while the right hand in the fourth pair holds the trident of Śiva, and the left one is broken.

On the west face of the Limboji Mata temple at Delmal, a panel contains a similar image as the one described above. The image wearing an armour and boots is seated on Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of Viṣṇu, flanked by the other *vāhanas* of Śiva and Brahmā. The image does not have anything noteworthy from the inconographical point of view.[19] As regards the main deity of the composition, Dr. Sankalia believes that here Sūrya is emphasized more[20] because of the main hands holding the lotuses, but a big figure of Garuḍa supporting the main image would indicate an emphasis on Viṣṇu also as in the image in the Jhalawar Museum.

A niche of the Pratapesvara temple at Khajuraho contains an image in *padmāsana* with three faces and eight hands. The main head wears a *kirīṭa* and the side ones are adorned with *jaṭās*. His lotuses held in either hand in front are broken. The remaining three right hands hold a rosary, trident and the discus and the left ones hold the *kamaṇḍalu*, the snake and the conchshell. Below the *padmāsana* on the pedestal are represented seven horses carrying Sūrya.[21] The Duladeva temple also contains a similar image.

It is clear from the images of Hariharapitāmaha belonging to the 11th-12th century A.D. described above that iconographically all of them are almost identical, deviating only to a small extent from the injunction of the *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*. According to the text, Śiva and Viṣṇu are to be represented on the right and the left of the image respectively, placing the emblems of Śiva in the two right hands and the emblems of Viṣṇu in the left hands, which shows that the Hariharahiraṇyagarbha image is evolved from the Harihara image. The sculptors, however, have tried to simplify it and instead, they have allotted each pair of hands to each god. It is noteworthy that the main deity is always Sūrya or sometimes Viṣṇu, but never Śiva or Brahmā.

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The number of images found in Gujarat, Rajasthan and central India, as against the absence of this type in the other parts of northern India, is a proof of the regional bias of these composite images in the late mediaeval period. This view is further supported by the fact that the first reference to these composite images is found in the *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*, a text written in Rajasthan.

A curious image of Harihara flanked by Sūrya and Buddha found in Bihar, is now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The central figure represents Śiva on the right side and Viṣṇu on the left. This is supported by the trident and the rosary in the right hands and the conchshell and the disc in the left hands, as also by Nandi and Garuḍa appearing on the pedestal. Both the gods are accompanied by their consorts, Pārvati and Lakṣmī. On the extreme right of the panel is the standing figure of Buddha in *abhaya-mudrā* with two *chaityas* carved above his head. In the corresponding position to the left is Sūrya with a lotus in either hand. He is mounted on a chariot driven by seven horses, the figure of Aruṇa the charioteer is also recognisable between the legs of the central figure. The sculpture is not a synthesis of four deities in a single composition but at the same time the appearance of the images of Sūrya and Buddha on the same panel suggests a spirit of synthesis. Instead of occupying a part in the composite Harihara image, the Buddha and Sūrya are shown to be accompanying it. It is noteworthy that one of the deities in that synthesis is the Buddha in the place of Brahmā, owing to the predominance of Buddhism in Bengal and Bihar, in the mediaeval period. The image may be dated to the 11th century A.D. (Fig. 49).

In the 14th-15th century, people united several forms of Viṣṇu into one. For instance, two images in the Bhubaneshwar Museum depict the blending of Kṛṣṇa Veṇugopāla, Govardhanadhārī and Viṣṇu. The small figure of Śeṣaśāyī is carved near the feet. A similar image has come to light from Gujarat also, but these images belong to a very late period.

The images of Hariharahiraṇyagarbha are generally carved on the niches of temples. No shrine exclusively devoted to the god is known so far, but at the same time, it is certain that the form was acknowledged and greatly revered in western and central India.

III

In the 9th-10th century, Viṣṇuism shows a clear impact of Buddhism, especially in eastern India. Several images of Viṣṇu, standing under the snake-hood, at times with a figure of a Dhyānī Buddha on it, have come to light from eastern India.

An image of Viṣṇu standing under the snake-hood found from Sunderban, is in the collection of the Asutosh Museum, designated as Viṣṇu-lokeśvara. This image datable to the 9th century has his lower right hand in the *abhaya-mudrā*, his upper

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right hand holds the disc, upper left holds the lotus and the lower left holds the conch. It is flanked by Śrī and Bhūmidevī.

A similar image from Midnapur is in the collection of the same Museum. The iconography is more detailed and stylized. The mace and the disc held in the two upper hands are placed on the lotuses held by Viṣṇu. The mace is horizontally placed on the lotus. The lower two hands hold the lotus and the conch. Śankha Puruṣa and Cakra Puruṣa flank the main figure. Near by are seen seated attendants. In the middle of the panel, on the either side are seen Śiva and Lakṣmī to the right and the left respectively. On the top of the snake-hood is a figure of a Dhyānī Buddha, markedly showing Buddhist influence on Vaiṣṇavism. Buddhism seems to have superseded Vaiṣṇavism and hence Viṣṇu is being subordinated to Buddha. Below on the pedestal is carved the figure of the dancing Śiva (Fig. 48).

Two images of similar iconography are known from Ghiyasabad and Sonarang.[22] In the image of Sonarang the serpent is not personified and besides there is an image of the Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha on the top of the hood as also in the image preserved in the Asutosh Museum described above. The image from Ghiyasabad is mutilated. The only remarkable feature in this image is that the emblems are placed on the lotuses held by Viṣṇu, instead of holding them directly. An 11th century image of Viṣṇu in the National Museum has a figure of Avalokiteśvara on the pedestal (Fig. 51).

All these images reveal a great affinity to the Buddhist images. In fact the presence of a Dhyānī Buddha on the top of the hood is suggestive of a clear synthesis of Viṣṇu with Lokanātha of the Mahāyāna pantheon. The prominence of Buddhism in Bengal during the Pala rule has tried to subdue other orthodox sects prevalent at that time. Hence, we find in these specimens a synthesis of the two religions which do not seem to have prevailed outside eastern India. A number of Brahmanic deities are adopted and synthesized in later Buddhism as indicated by a number of iconographic forms like Harihariharivāhana Lokeśvara, Viṣṇucakra Lokeśvara, etc.

IV

Another composite form that evolved in the mediaeval period is that of Yoganārāyaṇa or Yogeśvara Viṣṇu. The form seems to be a composite form of Buddha and Viṣṇu.

Yogeśvara Viṣṇu represents him as the *yogī* and hence the most important feature of the image is the *padmāsana* and the *dhyāna-mudrā*. Viṣṇu is seated in the *dhyāna-mudrā* or meditation as the *dhyānī* Buddha does, but the only difference is in the number of hands. Viṣṇu even in his *dhyānī* form is endowed with four hands, the lower two in the *dhyāna-mudrā* and the upper two holding two emblems of Viṣṇu. He is also adorned with ornaments and the *vanamālā*, quite

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unlike a *dhyānī* Buddha. The description of Yogeśvara Viṣṇu is found only in the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*.[23]

The earliest image of Yoganārāyaṇa that we have known is from the Rajiva Locana temple at Rajim. Viṣṇu is seated on the lotus in *yogāsana* with two of his hands in the *yoga-mudrā*. The upper two hands hold the disc and the conch. This haloed image is a beautiful example of the 7th century.[24]

An image of Yoganārāyaṇa is in the collection of the Jodhpur Museum.[25] The profusely ornamented image shows Viṣṇu in the *dhyāna-mudrā*, seated on a lotus. The lotus stalk is held by a *nāga* couple. Viṣṇu holds in his upper two hands the *vanamālā*.

A very similar, but slightly mutilated image has come to light from Devangana near Abu. Here also, Viṣṇu is in the *dhyāna-mudrā*, seated on a lotus, with its stalk flanked by the *nāgas*.

The image from Didwana is seated in *dhyāna-mudrā* on a lotus with devotees below it. The upper two hands hold the *vanamālā* in a very stylistic way. It is a beautiful specimen of the 10th century art of Gujarat.

It may be noted here in brief that this motif of the lotus and the *nāgas* under it, is a typically Buddhist feature, clearly visible in the cave temples of western India.

The image in the Mathura Museum shows Viṣṇu seated on a pedestal. The upper two hands of the god hold the mace and the disc (Fig. 52). A similar image is also in the Chattarpur Museum. The image is partly mutilated, but it seems that it was only two-handed, both of them in the *dhyāna-mudrā*.

A small image of Yoganārāyaṇa is in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan which is very similar to the image from Mathura.

This is the common type of Yoganārāyaṇa image. The image from Khajuraho is slightly different as it shows Viṣṇu seated in the *padmāsana*, but not in the *dhyāna-mudrā*. The upper two hands hold the mace and the disc, the lower right is held up to place the first finger on the lips and the lower left seems to be mutilated. It represents Viṣṇu in *maunavrata*. He is seated on a lotus as usual, with the *nāgas* seated under it.[26]

All these images are datable to the period between the 10th and 12th century and are four-handed.

An image from Vaśiṣṭhāsrama, Abu, is interesting because it shows Viṣṇu with six or probably eight hands. All the hands are broken and hence nothing can be said about the emblems held by them. The *nāga* couples and the *āyudha-puruṣas* are

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flanking the lotus stalk. This is the only multi-handed variety of this form found so far, but it leaves the possibility of the existence of such images. The image is datable to the 9th century A.D.

Notes

1. *Mahābhārata*, III, 40, 57.
2. वामार्धे माधवं विद्याद् दक्षिणे शूलपाणिनम् ।
   बाहुद्वयञ्च कृष्णस्य मणिकेयूरभूषितम् ॥
   शंखचक्रधरं शान्तमारक्तांगुलिविप्रभम् ।
   चक्रस्थाने गदां वापि पाणौदद्याद् गदाभृतः ॥
   शंखञ्चैवेतरे दद्यात्कटयर्धः भूषणाज्जवलम् ।
   पीतवस्त्रपरिधानं चरणं मणिभूषितम् ॥
   भुजंग हारवलयं वरदं दक्षिणं करम् ।
   व्यालोपवीत संयुक्तं कटयर्धं कृत्तिवाससम् ॥
   मणिरत्नैश्च संयुक्तं पादं नागविभूषितम् ।
   शिवनारायणस्यैव कल्पयेद्रूपमुत्तमम् ॥

   Matsya Purāṇa, 260, 22-27.
3. *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*, VI, 35-41.
4. कार्यो हरिहरश्चापि (स्यापि ?) दक्षिणार्धे सदाशिवः ।
   वामार्धे च हृषीकेशः श्वेतनीलाकृतिः क्रमात् ॥
   वरं त्रिशूलं चक्राब्जधारिणो बाहवः क्रमात् ।
   दक्षिणे वृषभः पार्श्वेवामे विहगरुडिति ॥

   Ibid., VI, 56-57.
5. *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*, VI, 33, 34.
6. Diskalkar, D.B., Some Brahmanical Sculptures in the Mathura Museum, *JUPHS*, Vol. V, Part I, Jan. 1932, p. 44, pl. 18.
7. Jayakar, Pupul, Osian, *Marg*, XII, No. I, December '58, Pl. X.
8. Shah, U.P., *Sculptures from Samalaji and Roda*, Pl. 112.
9. Probably a Harihara temple existed at Roda also. See Shah, U.P., *op. cit.*, p. 112.
10. एकपीठ समारूढं तनुत्रयनिवासिनम् ।
    षडभुजञ्च चतुर्वक्त्रं सर्वलक्षणसंयुतम् ॥
    अक्षसूत्रं त्रिशूलञ्च गदाचैव तु दक्षिणे ।
    कमण्डलुञ्च खट्वांगं चक्रं वामभुजे तथा ॥

    Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, VI, 42-43.
11. Dave, K.B., *Gujarātnu Mūrtividhāna*, p. 314.
12. Cousens, *Somanath*, Pls. LIII and LXVII.
13. Dr. Sankalia calls it Trimurti. See his *Archaeology of Gujarat*, p. 163.
14. चतुर्वक्त्रमष्टवाहुं चतुष्कैकनिवासिनम् ।
    ऋद्धामुखगतः कार्यः पद्महस्तौ दिवाकरः ॥
    खट्वागंत्रिशूलहस्तो रुद्रोदक्षिणतः शुभः ।
    कमण्डलु चाक्षसूत्रमपरस्थः पितामहः ॥
    शंखचक्रधरो हरिर्वामिचैव तु संस्थितः ।

    Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, VI, 44-46.
15. *Aparājitapṛcchā*, 213, 32-34.

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16. Agrawal, R C., Sikar, *Marg*, Vol. XII, March, 1959, Pl. 71.
17. Annual Administrative Report of the Arch. Dept., Gwalior State, for the year 1933-34, Pl. XII.
18. Awasthi, Ramashraya, Khajuraho ki Harihara-Hiraṇyagarbha Pratimāyen, *JUPHS*, Vol. X, Part II, Pl. X.
19. Burgess and Cousens, *Archaeological Antiquities of Northern Gujarat*, p. 88, Pl. LXIX, LXXI 7.
20. Sankalia, H.D., *op. cit.*, p. 164.
21. Awasthi, Ramashraya, *op. cit.*, Pl. XI.
22. Banerji, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, Pl. XXXIII d.
23. *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*, II, 114.
24. Dikshit, M.G., *Sirpur and Rajim Temples*, p. 73.
25. Anand, Mulk Raj, Remnants stored against the Ruins, *Marg*. No. XII, p. 22, fig. 20.
26. Agrawal, Urmila, *Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance*, Pl. 23.

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MATSYA AND KŪRMA

Matsya and Kūrma, the first two of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, are minor ones compared to his other *avatāras*. They are neither often adored and exalted in the religious texts nor usually represented individually in stone and worshipped by the people. However, in no way does this undermine their importance, nor does it imply a mere accidental connection with Viṣṇu. The fish and the tortoise forms of Viṣṇu represent an important aspect of that great god, and therefore, due importance must be given to their symbolic significance.

MATSYA : It is really a problem how the fish came to play a part in the *avatāra* cycle of Viṣṇu. It does not figure in the Vedic mythology. From out of the way references to the fish that we find in the later literature, it is possible to surmise that the fish was considered a symbol of fertility. For instance, the sacrificial offering of a fish-otter to *Apām Napāt* prescribed in the *Kauśika Sūtra*[1] can be attributed to the idea of attaining the water of life.[2]

There is an interesting story concerning the birth of Matsya in the *Bṛhaddevatā*.[3]

The two Ādityas *viz.*, Mitra and Varuṇa happened to see the nymph Urvaśī. On seeing her, their semen was effused and fell into a jar, into the water and on the ground. As a result the sage Vaśiṣṭha was born on the earth, Agatsya from the jar,

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and the Matsya "of Great Brilliance" in the water. This Matsya of great brilliance is a synonym for the waters and more distinctly stands for the water of life. It symbolizes the power of fertility, a fact which led to the identification of the fish and Viṣṇu, himself closely connected with the waters and creation in his Nārāyaṇa and several other forms.[4]

The main or the only function of the Fish as an incarnation of Viṣṇu was to save Manu from the Great Flood and help him to assume the role of a creator. Some scholars[5] try to trace the antiquity of the flood legend to the *Atharva Veda,* XIX, 39, 8, but their interpretation being doubtful cannot be relied upon. The legend is found in its fully developed form in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,*[6] which runs as follows :

One morning, while Manu was washing his hands with the water specially brought for him, a small fish came into his hands. It began to speak and requested Manu to rear it up and promised him to save his life from an all-destroying flood. Thereupon, Manu inquired how to rear it up. It said : "Thou wilt first keep me in a jar. When I outgrow that, thou wilt take me into a pond prepared by you, when I outgrow that thou wilt take me down to the sea, for then I shall be beyond destruction." Soon it grew into a big fish (*jhaṣa*). It asked Manu to prepare a ship and board it when the flood would come. In the same year which the fish had indicated to him, he prepared a ship and entered it. The fish swam up to him and he tied the ship's rope to the horn of the fish. Thus they crossed swiftly upto "yonder northern mountain".

In the *Mahābhārata* also we find the same legend wherein the fish is described as *śṛñgī*, having a horn.[7] Here he is considered to be a form of Prajāpati rather than of Viṣṇu.[8]

The symbolic significance of the fish in the early period is attested by a couple of finds from Sarnath and Mathura. A pillar from Sarnath contains a fish-god with two tails. It is a human form having a fish for the lower part of its body.[9] Another fish-god is engraved on the belt of a human figure from Mathura.[10] The significance of these fish-gods is not yet explained but it perhaps indicates that the symbolism of fish as the water of life and creation had been realized, though its relation to Viṣṇu is not yet clear.

The image of the fish incarnation of Viṣṇu is to be made in the form of a fish with a horn according to the *Viṣṇudharmottaram.*[11] Not many images of the fish incarnation have been found, and those that are available belong to the post-Gupta period.

An uncommon image of Matsya from Bajrayogini has been published by R.D. Banerji.[12] The bust of the four-armed Viṣṇu issues out of the neck of the fish enthroned on a lotus. The god holds the mace and the conch in his upper and the lower left hands, the disc in his upper right hand, while the mutilated lower right

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hand might be holding the lotus. The main figure is flanked by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, placed on two small lotuses springing from the main lotus stalk. On the pedestal is a small figure of Garuḍa and to the left and right stand the devotees.

Another such image is referred to by the same author, preserved in the palace of a Thakur at Sohagpur in Madhya Pradesh.[13]

Another such representation of the Matsyāvatāra is on a panel of the left inner *pradakṣiṇāpatha* of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho. Viṣṇu is seated in the *yogāsana* on a fish with the two lower hands in the *dhyāna-mudrā*, the upper two hands hold the mace and the disc. On either side of the deity are seen figures with folded hands, who may be identified as the *ṛṣis* accompanied by Manu.[14]

The fish incarnation, executed as half-man and half-fish, has been referred to by R.C. Kak.[15] This image hailing from Ramnagar in Jammu, is of crude workmanship and not of much importance. A small panel on the top row of the eastern wall of the Gauri temple at Bhubaneshwar contains a similar image of the Matsyāvatāra. The four-handed image of Viṣṇu issues from the neck of the fish, holding his usual emblems. The image is much later in date, belonging to about the 13th century.

The Matsyāvatāra, depicted as a simple fish on the full-blown lotus, is known from Garhwa in Allahabad district.[16] Behind the fish are seen four standing figures with folded hands. The identification of these four figures is rather difficult. If they are taken to be the *ṛṣis*, the number does not agree with the number given in the Sanskrit texts, where Manu is said to be accompanied by seven *ṛṣis*.[17] An almost similar figure is in the collection of the Gwalior Museum from Gyaraspur. A big fish is carved on the panel and behind it are four human figures with hair tied in *jaṭā* (Fig. 51).

On the door jamb of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho is the panel showing a fish on the lotus and four human busts above it. There are some animals and birds carved round the stylized lotus stalk.[18]

A beautiful image of the fish incarnation has come to light from Chamba belonging to about the eleventh century A.D.[19] A large fish is supported by the lotus flower from the base of which rises a pillar. The capital of the pillar supports a three-headed Brahmā and four other deities in the *abhaya-mudrā*. Lakṣmī is seen below the head of the fish. Above its tail is a skirted female figure, possibly the donor. An elegant composition of fish incarnation with attendants and musicians has come to light from Chamba (Fig. 53).

The Udaipur Museum also has a slab depicting Viṣṇu's incarnations. A large fish is carved on the top of the panel and below it are the four emblems of Viṣṇu, placed between the coils of a *nāga* (Fig. 56).

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These are some Matsya images from northern India. Iconographically they hardly show any peculiarity or variation. We invariably find the fish incarnation on the *avatāra* panels represented in the form of fish. No shrine dedicated to the Matsyāvatāra has come to light so far, thus indicating its subsidiary character. The images described above are mostly from the outer walls of some temples which show that it was revered as an incarnation of Viṣṇu without any special significance.

KŪRMA : This animal, the tortoise, also designated as Kaśyapa is revered in the later *Vedas* quite often. It is respected with much adoration as "the regulator of the sun."[20] Elsewhere in the *Atharva Veda* also he is connected with the sun.

यत् ते चन्द्रं कश्यप रोचनावद् यत् संहितं पुष्कलं चित्रभानु ।
यस्मिन्सूर्या अर्पिता सप्तसाकं तस्य..... ॥

"What silver, Kaśyapa, thou hast refulgent, what brightly shining lotus flower collected, wherein are gathered seven suns together,....."

Griffith's Translation.
A.V. XIII, 3, 10.

The term Kaśyapa definitely connotes the sun in the *Atharva Veda*, XVII, 1, 28.

परीवृतो ब्रह्मणा वर्मणाहं कश्यपस्य ज्योतिषा वर्चसा च ।
मा मा प्रापन्निषवो दैव्या या मा मानुषीरवसृष्टा वधाय ॥

"Compassed as I am with prayer, my shield and armour; compassed with Kaśyapa's bright light and splendour. Let not shafts reach me, shot from heaven against me, nor those sent forth by men for my destruction."

The commentary of Sāyaṇa on the *Atharva Veda*, XIX, 53, 10[21] also corroborates the same concept. He considers Kaśyapa to be one of the eight suns,[22] and quotes from the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* to support his view. The connection between the tortoise and the big mountain which he supports on his back in the "churning of the ocean" episode is possibly hinted at in this passage.

It is possible that the disc-like shell of the tortoise, its slow movement and the act of withdrawing within its shell, may have inspired the poets to compare it or to identify it with the sun. As a matter of fact, in the *Caturbhaṇī*, the slow-setting of the sun is compared to the movement of the tortoise.[23]

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* discusses in great detail the symbolism of the tortoise. It is identified with the life-sap of this world, the whole universe and the sun. It compares the Puroḍāśa with the tortoise and then explains its significance.

"He (the priest) then puts down a (living) tortoise: the tortoise means the life-sap. It is life-sap he thus bestows on Agni. This tortoise is that life-sap of these worlds which flowed away from them when plunged into the waters : that life-sap he now bestows on Agni. As far as the life-sap extends, so far the body extends : that (tortoise) thus is these worlds."[24]

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The tortoise is thus considered to be the life-sap of the world and hence is identified with it. The same text contains the following legend explaining why the tortoise is the life-sap of the world :

"Prajāpati desired to create the Earth. So he compressed the Primaeval Egg. The juice which flowed from it became a tortoise."[25] Kaśyapa, then, personified as the life-sap of the world, could naturally be said to be the Lord of Creation. His role as the Lord of Creation is so much emphasized that it is fancifully said to have assumed the name Kūrma only because he created the living beings.[26]

It is said, "Prajāpati having assumed the form of Kūrma created living beings. What he created, he made; and as he made he is called Kūrma. And Kūrma being the same as Kaśyapa, all the creatures are said to have descended from Kaśyapa. This tortoise is the same as the yonder sun."[27]

This particular aspect of the tortoise amply justifies the important role played by it in the myth of the churning of the ocean—symbolizing the myth of creation.[28]

The shape and the frame of the tortoise has also something to do with its identification with the universe, of which he is the creator. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa :*

"The lower shell of the tortoise is this (the terrestrial) world; it is as it were fixed, for fixed as it were is this world. And that upper shell of it is the yonder sky; it has its ends, as it were bent down. And what is between (the shell) is the air; — that (tortoise) thus is these worlds. It is these worlds he thus lays down (to form the part of the Altar)."[29]

In the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā,*[30] the Kaśyapa is also called the Lord of the Waters. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,* while piling up of the fire altar in the sacrifice, the tortoise is built into it, where it is left as the lord of the waters.[31]

Great reverence is paid to the cosmic tortoise in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa.*[32] The *ṛṣis* seek to behold something wondrous in the waters which they address as Yakṣa. Indra reveals to them the tortoise or *kūpāra* of boundless dimensions. The term *akūpāra,* as explained in the *Nirukta,* stands for the waters or the ocean, for the sun and for the tortoise.[33] It is also said in the *Nirukta* that the *Kaccha* or *Khaccha* means the one who covers the sky thus identifying him with the sun. It is, therefore, clear that the tortoise symbolizes the sun and the waters and is also considered to be the Lord of Creation. It is his connection with the sun and the waters that led to the identification of Viṣṇu with Kūrma in the *Purāṇas.*

The only important part which Kūrma played as an incarnation of Viṣṇu was in the Churning of the Ocean in which it served as a support of the mountain Mandara. The legend of the Churning of the Ocean has its roots in the *Vedas* in the

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opinion of Dr. Coomaraswamy.[34] The story is found in its full-fledged form in the two epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, though the two versions differ. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa* the sons of Kaśyapa begotten by Ditī and Aditī, *i.e.* the Devas and the Dānavas, decided to churn the ocean, the abode of Varuṇa, to attain eternal life through *Amṛta* and also to obtain the riches of the nether world. They used the Mandara mountain as the churning staff and the serpent Vāsuki as the churning rope. Then follows the list of various objects that came out from the ocean. At the end, the partners quarrelled amongst themselves for the *Amṛta* and ultimately the sons of Ditī were defeated and killed or banished.[35]

Strangely enough, in the whole episode the tortoise which plays an important role in the story related in the *Purāṇas*, is conspicuous by its absence. In the *Mahābhārata*[36] version, however, the story assumes a completely different shape. The gods and the demons wanted to churn the ocean in order to obtain *Amṛta*. They wanted mountain Mandara as support for the churning staff. The gods approached the tortoise king (Kūrma-Rājan) to lend his back or shell as a support to Mandara. It is peculiar that here Kūrma is in no way connected with Viṣṇu or with any other god. Hence, it may be surmised that the churning of the ocean and the tortoise, who in its deified form is symbolically connected with the creation myth, were assimilated in one legend, and what we find in the *Purāṇas* is the complete Viṣṇuised version of a popular folklore.

The identification of the tortoise and Viṣṇu might have taken place in the Gupta period for the Kūrma appears definitely as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*.[37] In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[38] it is said that Viṣṇu assumed the form of Kūrma at the time of churning of the ocean. The legend runs as follows :

All the gods, when defeated by the demons, approached Lord Viṣṇu for the invigoration of their power and valour. He advised them to invite the Dānavas to churn the ocean and to obtain *Amṛta*. He promised them to destroy the demons while they were engaged in churning the ocean. They were asked to use Meru as their churning staff and the serpent Vāsuki as their rope. On one side of the mountain stood the gods, on the other the demons. Viṣṇu himself becoming a tortoise supported the mountain Mandara on his back.

Like the Matsyāvatāra, Kūrmāvatāra also is very rarely sculptured and worshipped. There are no variations or complications in the iconographical details of the Kūrma. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottaram* and *Agni Purāṇa* the image of the Kūrma is to be made exactly in the form of a tortoise.

D.B. Spooner refers to a finely executed clay tortoise from Basarh,[39] of the Gupta period. There is no mark of reverence paid to it and hence it is difficult to judge whether it represents the Kūrma incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is quite possible that it was revered merely as a creature of the waters as also seen on the coins

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found from Besnagar.[40] Excepting this we have not been able to find any representation of Kūrma in the Gupta period.

One of the most interesting images of the Kūrma incarnation is in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras. A big tortoise with a well-rounded shell and rather long neck is placed on a pedestal. A striking feature of this image is the presence of a small four-handed figure of Viṣṇu holding his usual emblems, on the neck of the tortoise. The right leg of the deity is firmly planted and the left leg is folded as in the Varāha images as if representing its emergence from the waters. This image datable to the 9th century A.D. was probably used in worship somewhere in the region adjoining Benaras (Fig. 55).

An image of the Kūrmāvatāra from Garhwa, is reproduced by B.C. Bhattacharya.[41] Though the purpose of the sculptor is mainly to represent the Kūrmāvatāra, he has also combined with it the Churning of the Ocean episode. A big tortoise is placed on a floral pedestal with its head stretched out. Above it on the panel can be seen a rod wound by the serpent coil. On the left of the staff appear three figures holding the serpent coil and a similar figure is seen to its right. The three figures on the left are adorned with the *jaṭāmukuṭa* while the one on the right has the *kirīṭamukuṭa*, probably indicating the demons and the gods. On either side of the Kūrma are two figures with folded hands.

In the right and back inner *Pradakṣiṇā-patha* of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho, the Kūrmāvatāra is represented in an interesting manner.[42] Lord Viṣṇu is seated on a tortoise in *yogāsana* with his two lower hands in the *yoga-mudrā*, and the other two holding the disc and the mace.

Some of the later Sanskrit texts have described the image of Kūrma in its anthropomorphic form. According to the *Śrī Tattvanidhi*, Kūrma should be of golden colour holding in two hands the disc and the conch and the other two hands should be held in the *abhaya* and the *varada-mudrā*. He should be adorned with *pītāmbara* and ornaments.[43] The *Sāttvata Saṁhitā*[14] and the *Meru Tantra*[15] also describe the image of Kūrma holding the conch, the disc, the mace and the plough. Images corresponding to these *dhyānas* have not come to light so far.

A brief reference may here be made to the Churning of the Ocean scene which is several times depicted in Indian art. Though the Kūrma figures invariably in the churning of the ocean scene, the emphasis is mainly on the whole episode rather than on the Kūrma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. There is a panel showing the churning of the ocean scene in the Gwalior Museum. The mountain Mandara is supported on a big tortoise with a rope consisting of the serpent Vāsuki, wound round it. On the right side of the mountain stands Viṣṇu holding the disc in his upper left hand, the rest of the hands being broken. On the left side of the mountain appears Sūrya and on the top is Indra on his elephant mount. There are six other figures accompanying

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him who may be identified as the moon, the sun, Lakṣmī(?), Kubera or Dhanvantarī, the cow and an unidentified female figure (Fig. 57).

A similar churning of the ocean scene is carved on the door jamb of the Laksmana temple of Khajuraho.[46]

It is obvious from the meagre data that the Kūrma *avatāra* had almost escaped the attention of the worshippers of Viṣṇu. In literature also there is hardly anything written containing an invocation or appreciation of Kūrma. Only an inscription from Dhar, datable to the early 13th century, contains two odes in the *Āryā* metre to the tortoise incarnation of Viṣṇu, one of which was composed by king Bhoja of Malwa, who reigned in the 11th century.[47]

The rarity of the images of the Matsya and Kūrma *avatāras* may tempt one to conclude that these *avatāras* had hardly any relevance for the worshippers of Viṣṇu, but at the same time there is every possibility that there might have been a small number of Vaiṣṇavas who worshipped these *avatāras*. There are all the possibilities that these were the totems or the primitive cults and later the Brahmanic tradition incorporated them and bestowed them high symbolic significance. Further researches are awaited to throw light on the subject.

Notes

1. *Kauśika Sūtra*, 127, 10, 11.
2. Keith, A.B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads*, London, 1925, p. 279.
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   स्थले वसिष्ठस्तु मुनिः संभूत ऋषिसत्तमः ।
   कुम्भेत्वगत्स्यः संभूतो जले मत्स्यो महाद्युतिः ।
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7. आगमिष्याम्यहं शृंगी विज्ञयस्तेन तापस ।
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8. अहं प्रजापतिब्रह्मा मत्परं नाधिगम्यते ।
   मत्स्यरूपेण यूयं च मयास्मान्मोक्षिता भयात् ॥
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18. Agrawal, Urmila, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
19. Kramrisch, Stella, *Indian Sculpture*, Philadelphia, 1960, Plate 48.
20. Griffith, *Atharva Veda*, ad. IV, 20, 7.
21. काल:प्रजा: असृजत कालो अग्र प्रजापतिम् ।
स्वयंभू: कश्यप: कालात् तप: कालादजायत ॥
"Kāla created living things and first of all Prajāpati, from Kāla self-made Kaśyapa and from Kāla the holy fire was born."
(Griffith)
22. Sāyaṇa,
कश्यप: आरोगभ्राजादि सप्तसूर्यापेक्षया अष्टम: सूर्य: ।
Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, I, 7, 1.
23. *Caturbhāṇi*, (ed.) Dr. Moti Chandra, Bombay, 1959.
हैम: कूर्म: इवावसीदति शनै: संक्षिप्त पादो रवि: ।
II, *Dhūrtaviṭa Samvāda*, 70, p. 119.
24. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VII, 5, 1.
25. सोऽकामयत् । आम्यो ह्यो धीमां प्रजननेयमिति तां संक्लिश्याप्सु ।
प्राविध्यतस्यै य: पराङ् रसो त्यक्षरत्स कूर्मो भवद्.....॥
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, VI, 1, 1, 12.
26. स यत्कूर्मोनाम । एतद्वै रूपं कृत्वा प्रजापति: प्रज्ञा असृजत यदसृजता करोत्तयदकरौतस्मत्कूर्म: कश्यपां वै कूर्मस्तस्मादाहु: सर्वा: प्रजा: काश्यप्य इति ।
Ibid., VII, 5, 5.
27. स य: स कूर्मोऽ सौ स आदित्यो ।
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, VII, 5, 6.
28. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 129.
See Coomaraswamy, A.K., *Yakṣas*, p. 53.
29. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VII, 5, d.
30. *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*, 13, 31.
31. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VII, 5, 1.
32. *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, III, 203, 27d.
33. *Nirukta*, IV, 18.
34. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
35. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I, 41.
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VARĀHA

The origin of *Varāha* worship can be traced back to the period when Indian mythology was still "in its making", when people saw divinity in the varied forces of nature. While it is difficult to trace the origin of various *Rig-vedic* gods and their subsequent development, it is almost certain in the case of Varāha cult as found out by Prof. Gonda and U.P. Shah. They have suggested that the cult must have existed in the Vedic or even the pre-Vedic period.[1]

In the *Rig-veda* itself several gods are equated with the boar. The Maruts are called the 'iron tusked boars',[2] and also the 'wild boars'.[3] Rudra is addressed as the boar of the sky.[4] The boar in the form of demon Vṛtra,[5] plays a significant role in the Vedic mythology which laid the foundation of the whole of the Varāha myth in the later period.

Vṛtra in the *Vedas* is the personification of the clouds[6] and therefore, the boar as identified with Vṛtra represents the same natural phenomena. Yāska in his *Nirukta*[7] offers the following explanation while discussing the term Varāha : Varāha is the designation of both, the cloud and the boar, for Varāha is the one who eats the best type of food. The cloud is Varāha because it takes the best food, *viz.* the water, so also is the boar as he takes the best roots that grow up. Thus the cloud and the boar are etymologically identified. We can say that Varāha is the theri-

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morphic form of the Vṛtra, that is, the cloud. In spite of a tortuous way of reasoning and a fanciful etymology, the equation of Varāha with the clouds or primordial waters seems a sound proposition. The same idea is implied by a hymn of the *Atharva-veda*.[8]

मल्वं बिभ्रतीगुरु भृद् भद्रपापस्य निधनं तितिक्षुः।
वराहेण पृथिवी संविदाना सूकराय विजिहीते मृगाय ॥

Unfortunately, Whitney in his translation of the term Varāha as the boar, has obscured the meaning of the hymn. He translates it as follows :

"Bearing the fool, bearer of what is heavy, enduring death of the excellent and of the evil, the earth, in concord with the boar, opens itself to the wild hog."

If Varāha is taken here to mean the cloud, the meaning becomes quite clear—'the earth in accord with the cloud, yields (corn ?) to the hogs and animals.' It is implied in the hymn that the earth yields corn and riches to the people with the help of Varāha. He is, therefore, naturally called the protector or the supporter of the riches. In the *Rig-veda* it is said : 'Indra, shooting across the cloud mountain, slew the boar Emūṣa.'[9]

The extension of this myth is found in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*.[10] The legend relates that the boar kept the wealth of the Asuras concealed behind the seven hills. Indra picks up a blade of *kuśa* grass and piercing the hills, slew the boar. Thus the gods acquired the riches of the Asuras. A parallel legend appears in the *Kapiṣṭhala Kaṭha Saṁhitā*.[11] It says :

"There is a Varāha called Emūṣa behind the twenty forts of the Asuras, who has all the wealth of the demons. You (Indra) go and destroy him." Keith[12] has translated the term Emūṣa as fierce. The term is really the keynote to the character of the boar. *Muṣa* (Mosa) means the one who carries off or steals; *vāma* or *ī* stand for the riches or treasures. Thus, Varāha or Emūṣa Varāha means the one who carries off the riches or treasures, therefore, the earth—the embodiment of the riches. It may be noted in brief here that this very character is reflected in the words of *Matsya Purāṇa*[13] where Varāha is likened to the *maṇiśṛnga*, the cornucopia, which is considered to be a nidhi. It may refer symbolically to the act of Varāha of bringing forth the riches of the nether world in the form of the earth.[14]

In the Brahmanic literature, the relation of Varāha with the earth is fully established. The boar becomes a personified form of the great deity Prajāpati. The *Kapiṣṭhala Kaṭha Saṁhitā*[15] refers to the following legend concerning the origin of the cosmos.

"In the beginning there were primaeval waters—Once Lord Prajāpati, taking the form of a boar entered it (plunged into it) and he brought up (on the surface)

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the soil exactly of the size of his snout. That soil became this very earth." A similar legend appears in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*.[16] It says that in the beginning there were only the primaeval waters, Prajāpati taking the form of Vāyu entered the waters where he saw her (the earth) and then in the form of the boar he brought her up on the surface, and assuming the form of Viśvakarmā, planned her. She expanded and hence became Pṛthvī (the expanded one).

Emūṣa Varāha is stated to have raised up the earth from the waters in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.[17] The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*[18] mentions that the Earth was formerly upheld by the black boar with a hundred arms.

Mythology of Varāha rescuing the Earth from the waters is observed in its initial stages in these passages from the Brahmanic literature cited above. It deserves to be noted that Varāha is one of the forms of Prajāpati in its initial stages. His connection with Viṣṇu, whose important incarnation he became in the later period, is completely unknown at this stage.

The relation is also established between the boar and the sun due perhaps to its connection with the clouds. Varāha, right from the time of the *Rig-veda*, was referred to as Vṛṣākapi. In the Vṛṣākapi hymn of the *Rig-veda* (X, 86), Vṛṣākapi stands for Varāha as suggested by Dr. U.P. Shah.[19] In the *Mahābhārata* it is stated that Vṛṣākapi is the form of Varāha.

कपिर्वराहः श्रेष्ठ च धर्मश्च वृष उच्यते।
तस्मात् वृषाकापिं प्राहः काश्यपो मां प्रजापतिः॥

Mahābhārata, XII, 330, 24.

Harivaṁśa[20] and *Matsya Purāṇa*[21] also refer to the identity of Vṛṣākapi and Varāha. Vṛṣākapi is identified with the sun in several texts. The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* (II, 6, 12) says : *Ādityo vai Vṛṣākapiḥ*.

In the *Mahābhārata* he is considered to be one of the eleven Rudras (*Mahābhārata*, XIII, 7091). *Harivaṁśa* and *Matsya Purāṇa*[22] establish the identity of Vṛṣākapi and the sun or the Agni.

According to Dr. V.S. Agrawal,[23] Agni and Sūrya are the names of Varāha. In the *Bhāgavata* it is said that Varāha is the triple force of the cosmos which according to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[24] is symbolized by the sun.

Lastly, the description of Varāha as '*Chāyāpatni sahāyo*' goes to prove the same fact. Chāyā evidently is the consort of Sūrya, but here according to some *Purāṇas*[25] she accompanies Varāha. It shows that the original solar character of Varāha has been retained.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Varāha has definitely been incorporated in the *avatāra* cycle of Viṣṇu. It is stated that Madhusūdana or Janārdana assumed the form of

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Varāha, Siṁha (Nṛsiṁha), and Trivikrama.[26] The first detailed account of the Varāha myth is found in the *Harivaṁśa*.[27]

I

According to the texts on iconography, the Varāha images have two forms. It can either be anthropomorphic or zoomorphic. The *Viṣṇudharmottaram* describes various forms of Varāha as follows :

"Nṛvarāha should be represented on Śeṣa, having four hands with a beautiful jewelled hood, his eyes full of wonder looking at the goddess. In his natural hands should be placed the ploughshare and the club and his other two hands should be held in the *añjali-mudrā*. He should be adorned with snakes. In another form he is seen in the *ālīḍha* pose on Śeṣa. On his left arm rests the goddess Earth, with both of her hands engaged in salutation. He holds the club in his upper left hand. The other holding the disc, may be raised in order to kill the demon Hiraṇyākṣa, who has a trident in his hand."[28]

There is another way of representing Varāha where he is seated in meditation like the sage Kapila. He may also be shown holding a *piṇḍa*, symbolizing the earth, with his two hands.[29]

The fourth type represents him amongst many demons as the very personification of anger. He may either have a human form or the form of a boar while uplifting the Earth.

None of these forms described in the *Viṣṇudharmottaram* appear in iconography. The earliest image so far found is unique from the iconographical point of view.

It is an inscribed image belonging to the Kushana period, preserved in the Mathura Museum (No. 65, 51). The four-handed Varāha with his lower arms akimbo, holds in his upper hand a sun disc. The Earth goddess is supported on his shoulders and seems to be touching his mutilated snout. The *Śrīvatsa* mark appears on his chest. To the right of the main image is a *gāndharva* and the figure knocked down on the floor may be the demon Hiraṇyākṣa whom Varāha had defeated as mentioned in the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*. To the left is a devotee standing in the *añjali-mudrā*. The two sun discs in the hands of Varāha signify his connection with the sun (Fig. 58).

Several images of Varāha belonging to the Gupta period testify to the strong prevalence of Varāha worship in that period. The *Mudrārākṣasam*, a drama supposed to have been written in the Gupta period, also refers to it. Its concluding verse compares the great victory of Chandragupta with Varāha's conquest of the Earth.[30] *Caturbhāṇi* refers to *Śukara-siddhi* and indicates that the wrestlers propitiated him for strength.[31]

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The colossal Varāha image of Udayagiri has been published several times. It is a two-handed image standing on the Śeṣa supporting the goddess on his snout. There are several rows of figures behind him who are considered to be the *ṛṣis*. This is a peculiar feature so far not noticed in any other Varāha image. This huge figure occupying a very big panel of the cave, signifies, according to Dr. Agrawal[32] and others, the conquest of the earth by the renowned king Vikramāditya, during whose reign this image is supposed to have been carved.

Another very interesting image is found from Eran in Sagar District.[33] There is a temple of Mahā-Viṣṇu supposedly built during the reign of Chandragupta Vikramāditya. It contains a shrine of Varāha to its right side, in which is installed a colossal Varāha image,[34] measuring 16′ × 11′. It bears a Brahmi inscription dated in the first regnal year of the Huna chief Toramāṇa. It also records the construction of a temple to enshrine this image, which indicates the importance of Varāha worship in that region. The image is to some extent similar to the Udayagiri Varāha, excepting the rows of *ṛṣis* behind him. The Devī is shown hanging by the tusk of the boar. The image is two-handed, the right hand is *kaṭihasta*, the left one rests on the knee of the folded left leg, which instead of being placed on the hood of the serpent is placed on the stone base. Behind the right leg is a small female figure, probably a *cauri*-bearer.

One of such early images is also preserved in the Daśāvatāra temple at Badoh. The right hand of the god rests on his waist and the left one holds a lotus on which stands the goddess Pṛthvī. The left leg of the god is placed on the hood of the *nāga* couple (Fig. 59).

A mutilated Varāha carved in the round, datable to the early years of the 5th century, is found from Mathura and is preserved in the collection of Kṛṣṇa Janmabhūmi temple.

The Allahabad Museum has a much mutilated but quite an interesting image of Varāha. It is carved on a square stone, probably forming a part of a big pillar. It has four figures carved on its four sides, one of which contains the image of Varāha with the Devī held on his left arm. Below his feet is seen the reclining serpent with human face, holding his hand in the *añjali-mudrā*. The left leg of the god is on the serpent's chest and the other is on the coils (Museum No. 292).

It is remarkable that all the early images of Varāha mentioned above, except the one of the Kushana period, are two-handed and without any of the Vaiṣṇava *āyudhas* in their hands. It is only in the late Gupta period that Varāha images have four hands holding the peculiar emblems of Viṣṇu. So far as is known to us, no text on iconography has described the image of Varāha with two hands, like the sculptures described above. The description given in the *Matsya Purāṇa*[35] is doubtful about the number of hands attached to the Varāha image. If in the *pāda* 30a the correct reading is *tasya* instead of *tasyāḥ*, it may indicate four hands.

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Mahāvarāha holds the lotus and the mace in his hands. The goddess, whom he has brought up by his pointed tusk, is seated on his left arm holding a lotus. Her eyes are full of wonder gazing at her lord. The right hand of the god is placed on his waist. One of his legs rests on the Kūrma and the other one rests on the hood of the serpent Śeṣa.

Generally the four-handed Varāha holds either three or sometimes four emblems in his hands, however, it is also possible to find the four-handed Varāha without any of the Vaiṣṇava emblems, for instance, the Varāha image found from Rajim[36] has four hands, the front two clasped near the chest, the lower right is hanging down and the lower left is placed on the folded left knee. The left leg of Varāha is placed on the hand of a *nāga* in human form seated below with the hooded head. The Earth goddess is seen as in the other images, seated on the elbow of the god. In the adjacent slab are carved many *nāga* figures in the *añjali-mudrā* paying their reverence to the god (Fig. 61).

II

The post-Gupta and mediaeval period have produced innumerable Varāha images all over Northern India. The most common type is the image with four hands, the right hands holding the mace and/or the lotus, and the left hands holding the disc and the conch. Sometimes the disc is held in the right hand instead of the left. R.D. Banerji has published several such images from Eastern India.[37] One of the distinguishing features of some of the Eastern Indian images of Varāha is that between his legs, there appears a small figure of the boar and the goddess Pṛthvī by its side, indicating Varāha's dive into the primaeval waters to rescue the Earth, and the principal image indicating his emergence out of the waters. There is no need to enumerate all the Varāha images found from the whole of Northern India, some of which have already been published.[38]

Out of the overwhelming number of Varāha images, some which are important from the iconographical point of view have been illustrated here.

A small shrine at Devangana near Abu contains an image of Varāha belonging to about the eighth century A.D. The god seizes with his lower hands two *nāgas* by their tails. They are worshipping the god with folded hands. The upper right hand of Varāha holds the disc, the upper left arm, supporting the goddess on the elbow is mutilated. The lower right hand, besides holding the tail of the *nāgas* (*Nāgī* ?) is in *kaṭihasta-mudrā* and the lower left hand holds the tail of the *nāga* as well as the conch. Below on the left side stand two figures with folded hands. The leg of the god is supported on the hood of the *nāga* couple who are also seen paying their respect to the god. This peculiar feature of seizing the Nāgas by their tails may indicate the conquest of Varāha over the demigods of the nether world whom he had subdued. A verse in the *Agni Purāṇa* describes the image of Varāha holding the serpent Śeṣa in his hand,[39] but excepting this stray reference, no other text on iconography has any reference to this particular feature of Varāha's iconography.

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A very elegant image of Varāha belonging to the 9th century is in the Jhalawar Museum. In one of the right hands he holds the mace whereas the other holds the tails of the *nāgas* one of whom makes an appearance under the mace, passing behind the leg of Varāha. The other *nāga* is supporting the lotus placed below the left foot of the god. The goddess is standing in the *dvibhañga* pose on a small lotus held in his left hand. Śankha Puruṣa and Cakra Puruṣa flank the main image. There is an unidentifiable female figure sitting above Śankha Puruṣa. The image of Varāha is fully adorned and has a dagger attached to the belt (Fig. 63).

An almost identical image of Varāha is in the shrine of the Sachia Mata temple at Osian, near Jodhpur. Here, the god has seized the *nāgī* with folded hands, by her tail. In the upper right hand the god holds the mace while in the left hands are placed the conch and the disc. On the folded upper left arm of the god is seated the goddess Pṛthvī holding lotuses in her hands. The bent left leg of the god is placed on the full-blown lotus which is supported by a *nāga* couple. There is probably a dagger attached to the belt of the god. The image is a beautiful specimen of the western Indian art of the late ninth century (Fig. 60).

The exterior of the shrine of the same temple also has a similar image of Varāha in the principal niche on the east.[40] A Varāha image holding the *nāga* figure in the hand is preserved in the Jhalawar Museum.

It is evident from the few images described above that this particular representation of Varāha holding the *nāga* or *nāgas* in the hands, is a peculiar feature of Western India.

The Gwalior Museum has in its collection two peculiar images of Varāha, both belonging to about the 9th century. One four-handed Varāha holds the mace in his upper right hand and the lower right is in the *kaṭihasta-mudrā*. In the upper and the lower left hands he holds the disc and the conch. The goddess Earth is seated cross-legged on the folded upper left arm of the god, with one of her hands touching the snout of the boar and the other resting on a long stalk, on the either side of which is seen a *nāga* and a *nāgī*. The second image is almost identical with the one described above, except for the order of the conch and the wheel in the left hands of the god. A very noteworthy feature of these images is the small dagger attached to the belt of the god on the right side.

A much mutilated image found from Agroha in Punjab[41] resembles these images to a great extent. The god holds his common emblems—the mace, the conch which is mutilated, and the disc. The goddesses Śrī and Bhūmi are seen flanking the god on either side of the belt of the image. It is datable to the 9th century.

According to the *Matsya Purāṇa, Śilparatna* and *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa,* etc., one of the legs of Varāha is to be supported by the *kūrma* and the other by the *nāgas*,[42] but all the images referred to so far place the *nāga* or the *nāga*-couple below

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his left foot, the *kūrma* below the right leg remaining absent. Fortunately, a couple of images have come to light that tally exactly with the descriptions given by the *Śilpaśāstras*.

One in the collection of the Allahabad Museum (No. 432), found from Khajuraho is a fine specimen of this type. Varāha with the Earth goddess on his upper left arm, has one of his legs resting on a lotus held by a *nāga* couple and the other is placed on the back of the *kūrma*. His lower right hand is in the *kaṭihasta-mudrā*, upper right hand holds the mace, the upper left hand holds the disc and the lower left is broken. Below on the either side are seen the devotees. This richly-ornamented figure of Varāha has the small dagger attached to his belt.

One notable feature in this image is the presence of Dhyānī Viṣṇu on the top of the panel. He is seated on a lotus forming the canopy over the head of Varāha. His two front hands are in the *dhyāna-mudrā*, the other two probably hold the lotuses. A much mutilated figure of Varāha preserved in the State Museum, Lucknow (No. H123), also has a *kūrma* below his right leg (Fig. 62).

One may question the propriety of *kūrma* who is one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, appearing as a subsidiary figure under the foot of Varāha. But in this class of images, it seems to signify, like the *nāga* figures associated with the god, the nether world which the god had entered to rescue the goddess Earth. It is unlikely that the tortoise below Varāha represents Kūrma *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, has another image representing all the features peculiar to the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is a haloed four-handed figure, holding from the lower right hand in the clockwise direction, the tail of a *nāga*, the mace, the conch and the disc. On the elbow of the upper left arm is seated the goddess with folded hands. The figure is shaded with an umbrella. The bent left leg of Varāha rests on a lotus with a *nāga* couple seated on either side of its stalk. Under the right leg is either a snake or a fish—the creatures of the nether world. A small dagger is attached to the *kamarabandha* of the figure. The Śankha Puruṣa and the Cakra Puruṣa flank the main image.

The Sanskrit sources describe some other forms of Varāha which, however, have not been sculpturally represented in Northern India. The *Skanda Purāṇa* describes the image of Varāha having four hands, two of which hold the conch and the disc and the other two are in the *abhaya* and the *varada-mudrā*.[43] Though no such image has come to light from Northern India, this form is not unknown in the south. One such image of Varāha is published by T.A.G. Rao.[44]

The iconography of Varāha prescribed by the Tantric texts is more elaborate. According to them, Varāha is endowed with multiple hands, holding the disc, the conch, the sword, the dagger, the mace and the lance, while two of his hands are required to be in the *abhaya* and the *varada-mudrā*. He should be accompanied

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by the Earth goddess.[45] Besides these, according to the *Meru Tantra* he is to be flanked by the goddesses Bhūmi and Lakṣmī.[46]

The classification of the Varāha images in the south Indian texts is referred to here briefly. The Varāha image is classified in three forms, *viz.* Bhūvarāha, Yajñavarāha and Pralayavarāha. Bhūvarāha has the human body and the boar's face. Two of his four arms hold the conch and the disc. One of his left arms supports the legs of the Earth goddess, seated on the god's bent right leg, while the right one embraces the goddess round her waist.

Yajñavarāha should be seated on the throne, with Lakṣmī to his right and Bhūmi to his left, both of them holding the lotuses. The god should hold the conch and the disc in two of his four hands.

Pralayavarāha is much like Yajñavarāha, the only difference being the position of the goddesses. One of the right hands of the god should be in the *abhaya-mudrā*, the left one resting on his thigh.[47]

III

So far the anthropomorphic representations of Varāha have been dealt with. The zoomorphic form of Varāha is not discussed in details by the *Śilpaśāstra* texts but the sculptors have tried to carve him profusely in this form. The representation of this form of Varāha does not seem to be very popular in the Gupta period. It seems to have become favourite in the mediaeval period only.

An image of Mahāvarāha, the earliest of this kind, is found at Eran in the Sagar District.[48] It is a huge figure of the boar with the figures of *ṛṣis* and deities carved on its body. On one side of his neck is seen the Earth goddess, hanging by the tusk of the boar, with her left arm, exactly in the way the goddess accompanying Nṛvarāha from Eran referred to above. In front of the boar is a *nāga* in human form. There are several rows of devotees (Fig. 64). In the ear of the boar appears a flying figure. Near his neck is a belt with some unidentifiable figures carved on it. Brahmā is seen on its head. The image is datable to the 5th century A.D.

Another Varāha image in its zoomorphic form has come to light from Aphsad, Gaya. The front two legs of the boar are placed on a slightly raised pedestal on which the Earth goddess is also seated holding the tusk of the boar. The figures carved on the body of Varāha are those of the *munis* and devotees (Fig. 65).

A few images of the kind have come to light from the mediaeval period. An image of Ādivarāha is worshipped in the Sabalpur temple at Modasa, in Gujarat, datable to the 11th century A.D. The seven-hooded serpent Śeṣa in human form is standing on a *Kūrma* with folded hands. The coils of the serpent pass through the legs of the god, forming a knot at the end with the tail of the boar. Besides the

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Śeṣa is seen the Earth goddess, touching the head of Varāha with one of her hands. The conch and the disc are placed near his tail and the mace between the legs. Brahmā and several other gods of the Hindu pantheon are carved on his body.[49]

The image from the Jhalawar Museum has peculiar four-handed figures on the legs. The front two hands are in *namaskāra-mudrā* and the other pair of hands is held up in adoration (Fig. 66).

The famous Ādivarāha found from Dudhai in Lalitpur District, now preserved in the Lucknow Museum, is a beautiful specimen of the 11th-12th century.[50] A very similar figure of the Boar is standing in situ at Chandpur bearing an inscription dated in *samvat* 1207/1150 A.D. [51]

Rajkot Museum has also a fine image of Ādivarāha found from Wardhavan. Several figures of the *munis* and deities are carved round his body as in the Eran Boar. Just below the mouth of Varāha appears Garuḍa with the snake hood around the head.

A very much mutilated piece of Ādivarāha, lying in the verandah of the Allahabad Museum, depicts a row of figures on its body representing the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu as well as the Churning of the Ocean scene.

A similar image is found from Vasisthasrama, Abu, where one of the legs of Varāha is supported on the disc and the conch is lying by its side. Images of Ādivarāha have also come to light from Vijapur, Vihar, etc.

It is clear from the iconographic representations of Varāha that the cult had a wide prevalence right from the time of the Guptas. Individual temples, dedicated to Varāha, are noted in some inscriptions. The stone pillar inscription from Eran, Central India, belonging to about the 5th century, mentions a temple of Varāha.[52] The copper plate inscription of the time of Budhagupta, found from Damodarpur in Bengal, records the erection of Śveta Varāha temple, somewhere in Nepal.[53] The shrine of the Varāha temple of the Gupta period still exists at Deogarh.[54] The *Rājataraṅgiṇī* refers to the *Varāhamūla* or *Varāhakṣetra* where the temple of Mahāvarāha existed.[55] It also mentions that the king Lalitāditya installed a magnificent image of Mahāvarāha.[56] The king Bhoja Deva of Kanauj had issued the Mahāvarāha coins.[57] Thus, it is evident that the Varāha cult had attained the royal patronage and was able to maintain its high position continually till the late mediaeval period.

The female counterpart of Varāha also plays a very important role. The *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* identifies Vārāhī with the Earth.[58] She is never represented together with Varāha but acquired the position of a mother goddess individually. She is always included in the list of the sapta-mātṛkā also. Quite a few images of

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Vārāhī have come to light right from the 6th-7th century.[59] Her iconography is varied and is much influenced by Tantrism as well.

Notes

1. Shah, U.P., Vṛṣākapi in the Rig-veda, *JOI*, Baroda, 1968, Vol. VIII, No. I, p. 56.
2. *Rig-veda*, I, 88.
3. *Ibid.*, X, 67, 7.
4. *Ibid.*, I, 114, 5.
5. *Ibid.*, I, 121, 11; 61, 7; VIII, 66, 10; X, 99, 6.
6. Keith, A.B., *Indian and Iranian Mythology* (Mythology of All Races, Vol. VI), p. 35.
7. वराहो मेघो भवति वराहारः । वरमाहारमाहर्षीर् । इति च ब्राह्मणम् ।
   Nirukta, V, 4.
   See the commentary by Durga :
   मेघस्तावद् वराह उच्यते । स हि वराहारो भवति, तस्य वरं उदकं आहारः ।
   वरमाहारमाहर्षीर् । इति च ब्राह्मणम् । अयमपीतरो वराह एतस्मादेव ।
   असावपि वरं मूलाख्यं आहारमाहरत्येव । वरं वरं मूलं वृहति ।
   उद्यच्छतीत्यर्थः ।
8. *Śaunakīya Atharva veda*, XII, 1, 48.
9. *Rig-veda*, VIII, 77, 10.
10. *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, VI, 2, 4, 2.
11. एमूषो नामायं वराह इत्यब्रवीदेकविंशायाः पुरामश्ममहीनां पारे यत्किंचासुराणां
    वामं वसु तेन तिष्ठति तं जहि य एष कृच्छ्रे हन्तवोचथा इति ।
    Kapiṣṭhala Kaṭha Saṁhitā, XXXVIII, 5.
    Also compare :
    वराहोऽयं वाममोषः in the passage of the *T. S.*
    I am indebted to Prof. G.C. Jhala for helping me in the interpretation of the text.
12. Keith, A.B., *op.cit.*, p. 30.
13. छायापत्नी सहायो वै मणिश्रृंग इवोच्छितः ।
    Matsya Purāṇa, 248, 73.
14. Dr. Moti Chandra, *Nidhiśṛnga*, *Bulletin of the PWM of Western India*, No. 9.
15. सलिलमेव स प्रजापतिर्वराहो भूत्वा पन्यमञ्जत् । तस्य यावन्मुखं आसीत तावतीं मृदमहरत् ।
    सैयमभवत् ।
    Kapiṣṭhala Kaṭha Saṁhitā, VI, 7.
16. आपो वा इदमग्रे सलिलमासीत् । तस्मिन प्रजापतिर्वायु भूत्वाऽचरत् ।
    स इमामपश्यत् तां वराहो भूत्वाऽहरत् । तां विश्वकर्मा भूत्वा व्यमार्ट । साऽप्रथत सा पृथिव्यभवत् ।
    Taittirīya Saṁhitā, VII, 1, 5, 1.
17. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XIV, 1, 2, 11.
18. भूमिर्धेनुधरणी लोकधारिणी ।
    उद्धृतासि वराहेण कृष्णेन शतबाहुना ॥
    Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, X, 1, 8.
19. Shah, U.P., *op. cit.*, p. 41 ff.
20. ततो विभुः प्रवराहरूपधृक्–
    वृषाकपिः प्रसभमथैकदंष्ट्रया ।
    Harivaṁśa, III, 34, 48.

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21. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 247, 79.
22. हिरण्यरेतास्त्रिशिखः भूत्वा वृषाकपिः ।
शिखिभिर्विधमंल्लोकानशोषयत वह्निना ॥
Matsya Purāṇa, 246, 79.
23. Dr. V.S. Agrawal, Yajña Varāha—An Interpretation. *Purāṇa*, Vol. V, No. 2, p. 225 ff.
24. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 10, 5, 2, 2.
25. *Harivaṁśa*, III, 34, 31.
Also see *Vāyu Purāṇa*, VI, 22; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 247, 73.
26. मधुसूदनमित्याहुऋषयश्च जनार्दनम् ।
वराहश्चैव सिंहश्च त्रिविक्रमगतिः प्रभुः ॥
Mahābhārata, VI, 63, 13.
27. *Harivaṁśa*, III, 34, 30-43.
28. नृवराहोऽथ वा कार्यः शेषोपरिगतः प्रभुः ।
शेष श्चतुर्भुजः कार्यश्चारुरत्नफणान्वितः ॥
आश्चर्योत्फुल्लनयनो देवीवीक्षणतत्परः ।
कर्तव्यो सीरमुसलो करयोस्तस्य यादव ॥
सर्पभूष च कर्तव्यस्तथैव रचिताञ्जलिः ।
आलीढ स्थानसंस्थानस्तत्पृष्ठे भगवान्भवेत् ॥
.....
यस्मिन्भुजे धरादेवी तत्र शंखेः करे भवेत् ।
अन्ये तस्य कराः कार्याः पद्मचक्रगदाधरः ॥
हिरण्याक्षशिरश्चछेदश्चक्रोधतकरोऽथवा ।
Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 79, 2-7.
29. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 79-9-10.
30. *Mudrārākṣasam*, VII, 18.
31. *Caturbhāṇi*, (ed.) Motichandra, p. 196, Verse 62.
32. Agrawal, V.S., Gupta Yugmen Madhyadeśkā Kalā'mak Citraṇ, *Nagari Pracāriṇi Patrikā*, Vikramāñk, p. 48.
33. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, Vol. II, Pl. 109.
34. Bajpai, K.D., *Sagar Through the Ages*, p. 36, Pl. IV.
35. महावराहं वक्ष्यामि पद्महस्तं गदाधरम् ।
तीक्ष्णदंष्ट्राग्रघोणास्यं मेदिनीवामकपूंरम् ॥
दंष्ट्राग्रेणोद्धृतांदान्तां धरणींमुत्पलान्वितम् ।
विस्मयोत्फुल्लनयनामुपरिष्टात्प्रकल्पयेत् ॥
दक्षिणं कटिसंस्थं तु करं तस्याः प्रकल्पयेत् ।
कूर्मोपरि तथा पादमेकं नागेन्द्रमूर्धनि ॥
Matsya Purāṇa, 260, 28-30.
Also compare the description given in the *Śilparatna*, XXV, 113-115, and the description given in the *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*, V, 72-76.
36. Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Part I, Pl. XXXVIII.
37. Banerji, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, Delhi, 1933, Pl. XLV b, c, d, e.
38. Bhattasali, N.K., *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca, 1929, Pl. XXXVI.

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Also refer to
ASIAR, 1930-34, Part II, pp. 303 ff, Pl. CL d.
Burgess and Cousens, *Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat*, pp. 86 and 106, Pl. XLIII XCI.
Dave, Kanailal, *Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān*, p. 190 ff.

39. चतुर्बाहुर्वराहस्तु शेषः पाणितले धृतः ।
Agni Purāṇa, 49, 18a.

40. *ASIAR*, 1908-09, p. 106.

41. Shrivastava, H.L., Excavations at Agroha—Punjab, *MASI*, No. 61, Delhi, 1952, p. 3, Pl. X, i.

42. कूर्मपृष्ठे पदञ्चैकं अन्यन्नागेन्द्र मूर्धनि ।
Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, V, 74b.
Also see *Skanda Purāṇa*, II, *Vyankateśvara Mahātmya*, 2, 16b.

43. चतुर्बाहुमुदारांगं वराह वदनं शुभम् ।
शंखचक्राभयवरान्बिभ्राणं पुरुषोत्तमम् ॥

44. *Skanda Purāṇa*, II, *Vaiṣṇava khaṇḍa*, *Vyankateśvara Mahātmya*, *adh.* 1, 18.
Rao, T.A.G., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Part I, Pl. XL.

45. आपादं जानुदेशाद्वरकनकनिभं नाभिदेशादधस्तात् ।
मुक्ताभं कण्ठदेशाचरणविनिभं मस्तकान्नीलभासम् ॥
ईडे हस्तैर्दधानं रथचरणदरैः खड्गखेटौगदाख्याम् ।
शक्तिं दानाभये च क्षितिधरणलेसदंष्ट्रमाधं वराहम् ॥
Mantra Mahārṇava, *Pūrva khaṇḍa*, *Viṣṇu tantra*, *tarañga*, 7.

46. *Meru Tantra*, 26, 189-190.

47. *Vaikhānasāgama*, *Paṭala*, 58, p. 196.
Also see *Atri Saṁhitā*, *adh.* 58, verses 25-47.

48. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *Viśvakarmā*, London, 1914, Pl. XCIII.
Keith, A.B., *Indian and Iranian Mythology* (Mythology of Races, Vol. VI), Pl. XII.

49. Dave, K.B., *op. cit.*, p. 193.

50. Shastri, Hirananda, Some Recently Added Sculptures in the Provincial Museum, Lucknow, *MASI*, No. 11, p. 13, Pl. III.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

52. *ASIAR*, 1923-24, pp. 29-30.

53. Sircar, D.C., Kokamukha-Tirtha, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, March 1945, p. 56 ff.

54. Vats, M.S., Gupta temple at Deogarh, *MASI*, No. 70, p. 2.

55. *Rājatarañgiṇī*, VII, 1309-10.

56. *Ibid*, IV, 197.

57. Cunningham, *Coins of Mediaeval India*, London, 1894, p. 49.

58. *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*, 4, 4, 6.

59. Iyer, K.B., *Lalit Kalā*, No. 12, p. 48. (Addendum to an Article on a Two-Faced Vārāhī Image from Jagesvari.)

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NṚSIṀHA

It is rather difficult to trace the origin of Nṛsiṁha worship because early Brahmanical literature has not preserved any tradition justifying the symbolic significance of the beast. The lion as an embodiment of valour is sometimes revered, but it does not seem to have attained that position of a deity which Varāha and Vāmana incarnations did. Dr. Goetz suggests that Nṛsiṁha worship is the result of Scythian influence.[1]

The earliest reference to Nṛsiṁha is his invocation. He is invoked and described as possessed of sharp claws and fangs.[2]

"May Nṛsiṁha, whom we meditate, as having sharp claws and keen fangs, inspire us."[3]

A similar reference is also found in the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*.[4]

Neither of these references show any connection of Nṛsiṁha with Viṣṇu except that of juxtaposition—the invocation of Nṛsiṁha follows that of Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu. The deity who is always connected with the destruction of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu in the form of an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the Pauranic period, figures in the Vedas as a divinity who can either protect or injure men.

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In the *Mahābhārata*, Nṛsiṁha is considered to be one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. It is said that Viṣṇu assumed many different forms in order to protect the world, *viz.* Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, and *Mānuṣa*.[5]

The first complete exposition of the myth of the Nṛsiṁhāvatāra is found in the *Harivaṁśa*. The demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, after performing hard penance for ten thousand years, acquired a boon which assured him protection against gods and demons, *gāndharvas* and *yakṣas*, human beings, evil spirits and beasts. He remained unaffected by the weather and remained safe in heaven or the nether world. He could only be murdered by one who was capable of killing him merely with a single stroke of his hand. This all-powerful demon became a terror to the gods and consequently they approached Brahmā who directed them to Viṣṇu. After the repeated prayers of the gods for the destruction of the demon, Viṣṇu assumed the form of a Man-lion and proceeded to the demon's court. A fight ensued in which he defeated and killed all the demons and when Hiraṇyakaśipu rushed towards him, Nṛsiṁha tore out his entrails by his sharp claws. Prahlāda, the devout son of the demon, who recited a prayer at the end, plays an insignificant role in this version of the myth.

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* makes only a passing reference to the Man-lion incarnation. It only states that after his father had been put to death by Viṣṇu in the form of a Man-lion, Prahlāda became the ruler of the Daityas.[6]

In the later *purāṇas* like the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*,[7] the story assumes a slightly different form. Hiraṇyakaśipu had proclaimed his sovereignty over the three worlds and no one in his kingdom was allowed to acknowledge the supremacy of any god. Prahlāda, his son, however, turned to be a great devotee of Viṣṇu, even at the risk of his father's wrath. Once Hiraṇyakaśipu asked him, if Viṣṇu was present everywhere why was he not visible in the pillar of the hall where they had assembled, and saying this he struck the pillar which broke asunder. No sooner he did that, the Man-lion issued from the cleft and tore off the bosom of the demon.

These different accounts show the common origin of the myth and hence Wilson is probably justified in presuming that the Nṛsiṁha myth is a popular legend adapted by the worshippers of Viṣṇu to serve their purpose.[8]

I

The image of Nṛsiṁha is described in brief in the *Harivaṁśa*.[9] It only states that Nṛsiṁha tears open the demon with his nails, and holds in his hands the thunderbolt, the lance and the sword.

The *Viṣṇudharmottaram* gives us a detailed description of the images of Nṛsiṁha. It says :

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"The Nṛsiṁha image has strong shoulders, waist and neck. The middle part of his body and belly are lean. He has the face of a lion and the body of a man and his face is haloed. His ornamented image in *alīḍha* pose wears a blue garment. His face and mane are flamboyant. He is to be represented as tearing the bosom of Hiraṇyakaśipu with his sharp claws."

Another variety of Nṛsiṁha image is also described by the same text.

"He should be represented as seated on a *siṁhāsana* with his feet resting on the hands of Pṛthvī. Two of his hands should be placed on the mace head. His body should be surrounded by flames and he should hold in his hands the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus. His hair is flamboyant."[10]

It seems, however, that the sculptors of the Gupta period hardly took into consideration the injunction given by the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, because from a number of Nṛsiṁha images available from the Gupta period, there is none that tallies exactly with the description given above.

One of the most interesting early representations of the Man-lion incarnation is executed on a seal found at Basarh,[11] datable to the early Gupta period. Nṛsiṁha with a lion's face and a human body, is seated on a high pedestal in the *lalitāsana* pose, with the left leg folded and the right hanging down. His right hand is raised up in the *abhaya-mudrā* and his left hand is supported on his knee. The small inscription below on the pedestal is not decipherable. The demon Hiraṇyakaśipu is conspicuous by his absence, and so also are the typical emblems of Viṣṇu. The *vanamālā* hanging up to his knees, however, indicates him to be a Vaiṣṇava deity. Another remarkable feature is that he is only two-handed unlike the other images. The Gwalior Museum has a similar Nṛsiṁha image found at Besnagar, belonging to the Gupta period. It is also a two-handed image supporting a thickly maned lion head on a standing human body. Both of the hands being broken, nothing can be said about the emblems held by them, if any. The *vanamālā* is seen hanging down upto the knees. Behind his leg is probably a small pillar indicating his emergence from it.[12]

A similar image hailing from Pahlejpur,[13] about half a mile from the present Eran village, is lying in a shrine dedicated to Nṛsiṁha. Fortunately, even though the temple is in a ruined state, the image survives. This much-mutilated image was probably only two-handed, like the ones described above. The face and the mane are strikingly similar to the one from Besnagar. This image, enshrined in a Gupta temple dedicated to Nṛsiṁha, testifies to the high position acquired by Nṛsiṁha in that period.

A peculiar image of Nṛsiṁha is represented in the chaitya window of the famous Dasavatara temple at Deogarh. The god is seated on a full.blown lotus in *ardhaparyaṅkāsana*. His upper right hand holds the mace, and the lower right,

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supported by his folded right knee, holds the disc. The upper left hand holds the conch and the lower left is placed on the thigh. The fierce lion-face is surrounded by the thick locks of the mane spreading on the shoulders. The ornamental *mukuṭa* is an uncommon feature for the Nṛsiṁha images of the Gupta period. The sculptor has tried to create an impression of flames around his head in the form of a halo. To the left of the deity is a devotee in the *añjali-mudrā* (Fig. 67).

Another peculiar representation of Nṛsiṁha is also found in the Deogarh temple. A panel projecting in the centre of the doorway has an image of Viṣṇu seated on a coiled serpent. To his right stands a small human figure with a lion's head, evidently Nṛsiṁha. It is four-handed with two of his hands in the *añjali-mudrā* (Fig. 19).

An exactly similar figure of Nṛsiṁha with Viṣṇu seated on a serpent's coils has come to light from the Udayagiri caves at Bhubaneshwar.[14] Both these images represent Viṣṇu being adored by his own incarnatory form.

A much mutilated but an unusual figure of Nṛsiṁha belonging to the Gupta period is preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras. The two-handed Nṛsiṁha has a very fierce face with big moustache and bulging eyes. He is tearing open the entrails of the demon lying on his knee (Fig. 68).

In the Bharat Kala Bhavan, there are two square pillars belonging to the Gupta period, on each side of which is carved a Vaiṣṇava deity. One of the four sides of both of them represents a four-handed image of Nṛsiṁha, standing in a *samabhañga* pose and holding the usual emblems of Viṣṇu. The lower right hand is placed on the mace; the left lower hand is placed on the disc which is mounted on a pedestal. The upper right hand holds the lotus and the upper left hand the conch. Both of them are adorned with the *vanamālā*. Excepting the lion's face, the execution of these images is similar to the standing four-armed Viṣṇu images (Fig. 69).

Before we proceed further with our inquiry about the iconography of Nṛsiṁha, it is necessary to refer to a unique representation of the same found in a hillock near Kondamotu,[15] 40 miles away from Guntur in a brick shrine, related stylistically to the Nagarjunakonda sculptures. The main figure of Nṛsiṁha is flanked on the right side by two and on the left side by three figures. Nṛsiṁha is represented as a couchant lion withs taut legs. The *Śrīvatsa* appears prominently in the centre of his chest. At the level of the neck, this lion, has two human hands holding the mace and the disc. To his right, the figure in *abhaya-mudrā* and the conch in his hand, may be identified with Viṣṇu. A figure holding the sugar-cane bow in his right hand and a *makara* standard in his left hand stands to the right of Viṣṇu; he is probably Kāma. To the left of Nṛsiṁha a figure in *tribhañga* pose holding a flute and the bow, may be that of Kṛṣṇa. Next to him may be Balarāma holding a wine goblet in his right hand and the left arm is akimbo. The last figure carrying the

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sword and the shield in his hands may be that of Aniruddha. This panel perhaps represents the Nṛsiṁha and the Pañcavīra worship, and if the interpretation is correct, it is a very strong evidence supporting the prevalence of the Pañcavīra worship in the early Bhāgavata religion. Another noteworthy feature is the execution of Nṛsiṁha which is completely zoomorphic excepting the two human hands attached to the neck. Though no such image has been found from Northern India, it is probable that this cult also existed there in or before the Gupta period.

One remarkable feature of the most of the Nṛsiṁha images of the Gupta period is the absence of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu with whom he is so closely associated. The *Vaikhānasāgama* describes the single images of Nṛsiṁha as the Kevala Nṛsiṁha, but the images referred to above do not tally with that description. Kevala Nṛsiṁha has either two or four arms. If he is four-handed, the upper right hand should hold the disc and the upper left hand should hold the conch. The front two hands should be resting on the knees. Girīja-Nṛsiṁha, another variety of the single Nṛsiṁha, should be shown seated on a *padmāsana* in the *uṭkuṭīka* posture, the forelegs being supported in this position by the *yogapaṭṭa*.[16] Nṛsiṁha seated with the *yogapaṭṭa* round his legs is commonly found in the south rather than in the north.[17]

The number of Nṛsiṁha images found from the Gupta period is itself a testimony to the prevalence of the Nṛsiṁha cult in that period. The Gupta images of Nṛsiṁha are not only numerous but are equally varied from the iconographical point of view. These iconographical forms could not have been evolved without the strong patronage and support to the cult by the people. It is likely that the Gupta kings patronized Nṛsiṁha worship, since the last of the Gupta kings is named after the deity. A temple dedicated to Nṛsiṁha in Sagar[18] testifies to Nṛsiṁha being a prominent cult god.

II

In the post-Gupta period, Nṛsiṁha is almost invariably represented as killing the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu. This emphasis on the destruction of the demon is reflected in the *dhyānas* given in the post-Gupta texts. For instance, the *Matsya Purāṇa* describes vividly the fight between the demon and the god. According to it, the image of Nṛsiṁha is to be made eight-handed, fierce and having the face of a lion with thick mane. He should be shown to be tearing out the entrails of the demon. Their legs should be interlocked and the demon with a sword and shield should be shown attacking the god.[19]

The *Agni Purāṇa* describes the four-handed image of Nṛsiṁha. Two of his hands should hold the disc and the mace, and he should be striking the bosom of the demon with the other two. The demon should be lying on his left thigh.[20] According to the other description given in the same *Purāṇa*, he should hold the

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disc and the conch in his two hands and the other two should be engaged in killing the demon.[21]

Besides these four- and eight-handed images, we come across six-handed images of the god as well. Hence, the mediaeval images of Nṛsiṁha can be divided according to the number of hands into the four-, six-, eight- and twelve-handed variety.

The four-handed images generally hold the two Vaiṣṇava emblems in the upper hands and the front two hands are shown employed in killing the demon. One such four-handed image is in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The god holds in his upper two hands the mace and probably the conch. The front two hands are tearing out the bosom of Hiraṇyakaśipu who is lying on his folded left knee. The image seems to have been flanked by Śrīdevī and Bhūmidevī. This mutilated image is a specimen of the Pala art.[22]

An image of Nṛsiṁha found from Suhania, now in the collection of the Gwalior Museum, is similar in the iconographical details to the one described above He holds in one of his surviving upper hands the conch and the front two hands are tearing the abdomen of the demon, who is lying on his folded right knee. The folded right leg of the god is supported by a serpent-hood.

A panel found at Manora, a village in the Kaimur range in Central India, depicts in a vivid manner the fight between the god and the demon.[23] The right foot of the god is placed on the head of a prostrate demon holding probably a mace in his hand. The left leg is interlocked with the right leg of Hiraṇyakaśipu who stands to the left of the god. The front left hand of Nṛsiṁha is tearing open the bosom of the demon while his front right hand is in the act of striking him. He holds the disc and the conch in his two upper hands. This is a very striking image of the 8th century showing the god and the demon in combat.

A four-armed image of Nṛsiṁha from West Dinajpur district, preserved in the Government Museum, West Bengal, depicts Nṛsiṁha as an image of Viṣṇu. His face is that of a lion with his mane falling on his shoulders in two tufts. He holds in his hands the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus. Śrī and Sarasvati are flanking him as in the Pala Viṣṇu images (Fig. 71).

There are a large number of four-handed images of Nṛsiṁha found in different parts of Northern India. As they are iconographically almost the same, it is not necessary to describe them here in detail. The Khajuraho Museum has an image of the four-handed Nṛsiṁha in its collection with two upper hands in the *abhaya-mudrā* and the front two hands engaged in destroying the demon as usual. He does not hold any emblem in his hand.

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III

The six-handed variety of Nṛsiṁha image has not been referred to by any text on iconography, so far as is known to us. The Rajivalocana temple at Rajim in Madhya Pradesh, contains a six-handed image of Nṛsiṁha, datable to the 7th century. Here Nṛsiṁha is standing on a demon lying prostrate holding a sword in his hand. The right leg of the god is placed on the hips and left leg is on the tilted head of the demon. He is strangling Hiraṇyakaśipu who is resting on his folded leg. The two upper hands are completely mutilated. Hiraṇyakaśipu wears long moustaches and holds a sword in his right hand.[24]

There is another such image of Nṛsiṁha in the collection of the Dacca Museum. The two natural hands are engaged in tearing open the entrails of the demon, the lower two hands hold tightly the hair and the legs of the demon and the upper two hands hold the attributes which are not clearly visible. The bent left leg of the god is crushing the chest of another recumbent demon. A remarkable feature of this image is that the sculptor has tried to narrate the complete myth of Nṛsiṁha in stone and so we find to the right of the main figure a small pillar surmounted by a lion head, symbolically representing the sudden appearance of the god from the pillar.[25]

A similar image, with a very detailed representation of the whole episode, has been found in Birbhum.[26] On both the sides of the main figure are carved scenes depicting the earlier part of the legend. To the right is a figure in *añjali-mudrā* facing an enthroned person, presumably Hiraṇyakaśipu and his son Prahlāda. To the left of the main figure is seen Hiraṇyakaśipu kicking the pillar of his hall, thus challenging Prahlāda to prove the presence of his god there. It also shows the appearance of the Man-lion from it. The miniature Man-lion at the top of the pillar has his hands raised in the *abhaya-mudrā* to offer protection to Prahlāda. The six-handed Nṛsiṁha in the centre has lost three of his hands. The front two hands are taking out the entrails of the recumbent demon on his lap who is holding the *khaḍga* in his hand. The upper right hand seems to have been in the *abhaya-mudrā*. The bent left leg of the god is trampling a prostrate demon.

An image found at Vikrampur is another such representation of Nṛsiṁha. He is standing on a recumbent demon on the lotus pedestal. He holds the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu by his hair and the leg, the two front hands are occupied in tearing out the entrails of the demon. The upper right hand is probably in *abhaya-mudrā* and the upper left one in the *tarjanī-mudrā*. Below the lotus seat is carved the figure of Hiraṇyakaśipu kicking the pillar out of which emerges the small figure of Nṛsiṁha. To the right of the pillar stands Prahlāda in worshipful attitude. At the end, on the right side of the pedestal, appears Garuḍa with folded hands.[27]

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The Allahabad Museum also has two six-handed images of Nṛsiṁha, one of them from Uchandi is datable to the 7th century. But these images are very mutilated and the iconographical details are not clear.

A Nṛsiṁha image from Devangana near Abu is a fine specimen of 9th century workmanship. Hiraṇyakaśipu is lying on the folded right leg of the god who tears asunder the entrails with his front two hands. One of his left hands is in the *tarjanī-mudrā* and the rest are broken. To the right of the main figure appear two demons, near his left leg appear other two defeated demons—one recumbent on the ground and the other seated, while a demon holding the sword in his hand is standing there. The folded right leg of the god is placed on the shoulder of a figure wearing *mukuṭa*, with a benign expression on the face. He may be identified as Prahlāda revering the god.

A note on the *mudrās* associated with the Nṛsiṁha images may not be out of place here. Several images described above show the *abhaya-mudrā*, obviously indicating protection to Prahlāda threatened by his own father. The *tarjanī-mudrā*, shown by the Vikrampur and the Devangana images described above, is meant as a threat to the arrogant demon who refuses to accept the omnipresence of the god.

An interesting 9th century image of Nṛsiṁha from Chamba exhibits two different unidentifiable *mudrās*. The figure is seated on a *siṁhāsana* with both of his legs hanging down. The god wears only a loin-cloth. His two natural hands support his chin and the other two hands are in *tripatāka-mudrā*, the significance of which is not yet known. A small piece of cloth tied to the figure just below the chest, may have some esoteric significance or may be a *yogapaṭṭa*. On the pedestal are carved two miniature figures of the Man-lion. It is a very forceful representation of the Man-lion with rolling eyes, open mouth, and expanded nostrils. His thick mane is spread over his shoulders. It is remarkable that the god does not hold any of the Vaiṣṇava *āyudhas*.[28]

The six-handed variety of Nṛsiṁha was evidently very popular in mediaeves northern India. It does not differ very much from the four-handed variety because the purpose of the two additional hands is merely to hold the demon, who is lying on his lap, by his hair and leg. The eastern Indian variety has a peculiarity of its own. The eastern sculptors have a tendency to narrate the legend of Nṛsiṁha in the same panel, and the method is to carve the important incidents of the myth by the side of the main figure or below on the pedestal, as in the Trivikrama images.

The eight-handed variety of Nṛsiṁha is described in some Sanskrit texts besides the *Matsya Purāṇa* and the *Vaikhānasāgama*. The *Śilparatna* gives a detailed description of the images of Nṛsiṁha. According to it, the "image of Nṛsiṁha must have a fierce lion-face and eight hands striking the demon with his finger nails lying on his lap holding a sword and shield, pulling out the entrails of the demon with

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two hands. The remaining right hands should hold the disc and the lotus, and the left hands the mace and the conch."[29]

The *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa* also gives a similar account of the Nṛsiṁha image but instead of four *āyudhas* the god is said to hold only two; the remaining hands are occupied in killing and striking the demon.[30]

The eight-handed images of Nṛsiṁha are not as numerous as the four- and the six-handed ones. An eight-handed image lying in the verandah of the Laksmana temple at Sirpur, belongs to the seventh century. In this image, the upper two pairs of his hands are in the *abhaya-mudrā* and the two front hands are engaged in the act of destroying the demon who is hanging upside down between the legs of the god. The lower right hand is seizing the hand of the demon while the lower left hand is broken. The hands are thrown round the legs of the god. It is a forceful and vigorous representation of the god (Fig. 70).

The excavations at Amb in the Punjab have brought to light an image of Nṛsiṁha, much mutilated and of crude workmanship.[31] The upper right hand of the god is in the *abhaya-mudrā,* the second right is in the *tarjanī-mudrā*, the third is holding the hair knot of the demon recumbent on his right leg and the fourth one is tearing open his entrails. The left side has preserved only two hands engaged in holding and attacking the demon.

The Lucknow Museum has a beautiful image of the eight-handed Nṛsiṁha which is interesting from the iconographical point of view. The execution of the elaborate iconographical details, and its superb artistic quality class it among one of the most interesting images of Nṛsiṁha, datable to the 9th century. The two upper hands hold the *nāgapāśa.* Together with the end of the *nāgapāśa* the upper left hand also holds a shield. The second pair of hands holds the mace and the disc; the third pair is broken and the fourth pair is engaged in tearing out the entrails of the demon lying on the folded right leg of the god. Below this is represented a defeated demon fallen on the ground. The goddess, with a lotus in her right hand, to the right of the main figure, is probably Lakṣmī. A (attendant) figure to his left is holding a snake in his hand. Brahmā and Śiva are carved above on the panel (Fig. 72).

The presence of the *nāgapāśa* may point to Śaivite or Tantric influence on the Nṛsiṁha cult. Nṛsiṁha with the *pāśa* in his hand is described by the later texts like the *Pārameśvara Saṁhitā.*[32] It prescribes the lotus, the goad, the pestle, the disc, the conch, the bow and the arrow, the noose and the mace in the hands of Nṛsiṁha.

Another image holding the *pāśa* is in the collection of the Gwalior Museum. The four-handed god holds in his upper two hands the *pāśa.*

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The Nṛsiṁha image is sometimes even endowed with multiple hands. The ceiling of the Jain temple of Vimalavasah at Abu, contains a twelve-handed Nṛsiṁha with his legs intertwined tightly with the legs of the defeated Hiraṇyakaśipu. The palm of the upper right hand of the god is stretched out near his forehead as if in the *abhaya-mudrā*. The second right hand is also in the *abhaya-mudrā*. The third hand is in the act of tearing open the bosom of the demon, the fourth is holding a mace, the fifth is piercing the abdomen of the demon and the sixth is holding his leg. On the left side, the first two of the hands are broken, the third is proceeding to attack the demon, the fourth and the fifth hold the disc and an indistinct object and the sixth is tearing open the entrails of the demon. The god's rolling eyes, and lolling tongue give him a fierce look.[33] This image points to the adoption of Hindu gods in the Jain mythology.

Another such multi-handed image is in the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho.[34] The god is shown tearing off the demon lying on his lap as usual. Excepting the front two hands all the rest are broken.

The elaboration of the iconography of Nṛsiṁha and his association with Śaivite emblems testify to the impact of Tantrism on the Nṛsiṁha cult towards the 9th century. His most important function is forgotten and the object of the worshipper is to invoke him as a powerful god with multiple hands, and a terrific face. He ceased to be merely an incarnation of Viṣṇu and attained the position of a deity with Tantric significance. The intention behind this kind of worship was generally to achieve a particular object, mostly a harming one like the destruction of the enemy or the death of a person not in favour. The *dhyānas* are more like charms denoting some esoteric significance than merely means of emphasising a simple act of worship.

We may here refer to some of the *dhyānas* of Nṛsiṁha with the multiple hands and emblems, though they are of a later date. In the *Pārameśvara Saṁhitā* he is described as Sundarśana Nṛsiṁha.[35] "He has reddish tawny eyes and hair, red garments, fierce face and tusks, curved eyebrows and flamboyant forehead, and rolling eyes. He stands in *pratyalīḍha* posture. He holds in his sixteen hands, starting from the first right : javelin, sword, fire-bowl, goad, shaft, spear, battle-axe, disc, bow with arrow, noose, ploughshare, thunderbolt, mace, pestle and trident."

He is endowed with thirty-two hands by the *Nāradīya Mahā Purāṇa*.[36] In the right hands there are discus, lotus, battle-axe, noose, ploughshare, pestle, goad, *paṭṭiśa* (a weapon with three points), *bhiṇḍipāla* (short javelin), sword, club, and *tomara*, and one is in the *abhaya-mudrā*. In the left hands there are conch-shell, shield, noose, *śūla*, fire-pot, spear, *buṇḍīka*, *kārmuka* (a bowl-shaped instrument), *tarjanī-mudrā*, mace, *damaru*, and *śūrpa* (winnowing basket), and one is in the *varada-mudrā*. He strikes the demon on his head with two hands and with the other two he holds up his entrails; another pair is engaged in tearing open his bosom.

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Such images are found only in the later period, and that too primarily in South India.

IV

Some of the texts describe Nṛsiṁha seated with Lakṣmī in his lap. The *Skanda Purāṇa* says that Nṛsiṁha has a calm appearance when he is embracing Lakṣmī. He holds the discus and bow and his eyes are like the sun and the moon. His hands are extended to the knees and he is seated on a lotus of thirty-two petals.[37]

The *Nāradīya Mahā Purāṇa* portrays rather the fierce aspect of Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṁha. According to it, Lakṣmī, holding a lotus in her hand, is embraced by Nṛsiṁha. He wears a garland of entrails, and the *yajñopavīta* made of a serpent. He has five faces adorned with the moon-crest, one of them being green; each face has three eyes. Ten hands forming a circle hold : rosary, mace, lotus, conch-shell, bow, pestle, discus, sword and arrow.[38]

The images of Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṁha are not to be found before the thirteenth century. A shrine dedicated to Nṛsiṁha in the Jagannathpuri temple, contains a colossal image of Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṁha.

The survey of Nṛsiṁha images in the foregoing pages shows that Nṛsiṁha was regarded as one of the most favourite incarnations of Viṣṇu in almost all the parts of Northern India. It must have been greatly patronized in the Gupta period, and even after that Nṛsiṁha continued to exert considerable influence in the religious life of the people. The early images of Nṛsiṁha are two-handed, but as the cult expanded its iconography became complex, growing into multiple hands. The demon is associated with him regularly in the mediaeval period. Nṛsiṁha worship, as is evident from his iconography, is influenced by Tantrism. He occupies the position of a cult deity rather than remaining merely an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Nārasiṁhī, the female counterpart of Nṛsiṁha, does not seem to have attracted the attention of the devotees much, but is described in detail in the *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*.[39] She is to be made like Nṛsiṁha. She is not included in the known list of the Saptamātṛkās like Vārāhī.

Notes

1. Goetz, Hermann, *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, p. 85, n. 34.
2. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, X, 1.
3. *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, III, 17.
4. मयाधृता धारयति जगत्सहिसचराचरम् ।
   तस्मात्पृथिव्याः परित्राणं करिष्ये संभवं गतः ॥

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एवं स चिन्तयित्वा तु भगवान्मधुसूदनः ।
रूपाण्यनेकान्यसृजत्प्रादुर्भावविभवाय सः ॥
वराहं नारसिंहं च वामनं मानुषं तथा ।
एभिर्मयानिहन्तव्या दुर्विनीताः सुरारयः ॥

Mahābhārata, XII, 337, 34-36.

5. *Harivaṁśa*, III, 41-47.
6. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, XX.
7. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, VII, 8, 10.
8. Wilson, H.H , *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, London, 1840, p. 119, n. 2.
9. *Harivaṁśa*, III, 31, 44.
10. पीनस्कन्धकटिग्रीवः कृशमध्यः कृशोदरः ।
सिंहासने नृदेहस्तु नीलवासा प्रभान्वितः ॥
आलीढस्थानसंस्थानः सर्वाभरणभूषणः ।
ज्वालामालाकुलमुखौ ज्वालाकेसरमण्डलः ॥
हिरण्यकशिपोर्वक्षः पाटयन्नखरैः खरैः ।
नीलोत्पलाभः कर्तव्यो देवजानुगतस्तथा ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 78 (2).

सिंहासने सुखासीनः कार्योवा भगवान्हरिः ।
गदामस्तकविन्यस्तकरद्वितयभूषणः ॥
ज्वालामालाकुलवपुः शंखपद्मधरः प्रभुः ।
मूर्तिमत्पृथिवीहस्तन्यस्तपादोऽथ वोत्थितः ॥
शंखचक्रगदापद्मलाञ्छनैः शोभितः करैः ।
अग्निज्वालाकुलावर्तविभूषिततनूरूहः ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 78 (2).

11. Spooner, D.B. Excavations at Basarh, *ASIAR*, 1913-14, p. 133, Pl. XLVI, No. 191.
12. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Pl. 170.
13. Bajpai, K D., *Sagar Through the Ages*, pp. 36-37, Pl. V.
14. Danielou Alain, *Hindu Polytheism*, Pl. XI.
15. Khan, Abdul Wahid, *An Early Sculpture of Nṛsiṁha*, Hyderabad, 1964, Pl. I.
16. केवलं नृसिंहं पद्मपीठोपरिष्टाद् द्वौ पादौ विन्यस्योपरित्कुटिकासने नासयित्वोरु मध्ये वस्त्रेणाबध्य चतुर्भुजं शंखचक्रधरं अन्यहस्ताभ्यां जानुद्वयोपरिष्टात् प्रसारित नियुक्तं वा संस्थापयेत् ।

Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 58, p. 198.

Also see *ibid.*, *Paṭala* 58, p. 198, for Sthanu Nṛsiṁha.

17. Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Part I, Pl. XLII.
18. Bajpai, K.D., *op. cit.*, p. 36.
19. नारसिंहं तु कर्तव्यं भुजाष्टक समन्वितम् ।
रुद्र सिंहाननं तद्वद्विदारितमुखेक्षणम् ॥
स्तब्धपीन सटाकर्ण दारयन्तं दितेः सुतम् ।
विनिर्गतान्त्रजालं च दानवं परिकल्पयेत् ।
वमन्तं रुधिरं घोरं भृकुटिवदनैक्षणम् ॥
युध्यमान च कर्तव्यः क्वचित्करणबन्धनैः ।

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परिश्रान्तेन दैत्येन तज्जयेमानो मुहुर्मुहुः ।।
दैत्यं प्रदर्शयेत्तत्र खड्ग खेटक धारिणम् ।

Matsya Purāṇa, 269, 31-34.

20. नरसिंहो विवृतास्या वामोरुधृत दानवः ।
तद्वक्षो दारयन्माली स्फुरच्चक्रगदाधरः ।।

Agni Purāṇa, 49, 4.

21. *Agni Purāṇa*, 49, 17.
22. Banerji, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, Pl. XLVI c.
23. Khare, G.H., *Mūrti Vijñāna*, Poona, 1939, Pl. X.
Also see Banerji, R.D., *ASIAR*, 1921-22, p. 70.
24. Dikshit, M.G., *Sirpur and Rajim Temples*, Pl. 74-75.
25. Bhattasali, N.K. *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Pl. XXXVII b.
26. Dixit, K.N., *ASIAR*, 1921-22, p. 80, Pl. XXVIII b.
Banerji, R.D., *op. cit.*, Pl. XLVI b.
27. Banerji, R.D., *op. cit.*, Pl. XLVI a. On the lintel of the Valam temple in Gujarat there is an image of Nṛsiṁha. The upper left hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā* and the front two hands are tearing the entrails of the demon, as usual. The rest of the six hands are broken.
28. Goetz, Hermann, *Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, p. 83, Pl. IV.
29. *Śilparatna, Uttara bhāga, Adh.* 23, 8.
30. *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*, V, 77-84.
31. *Archaeological Survey Report, Northern Circle*, 1913-21, Hindu and Buddhist Monuments, Pl. VII, 2837.
32. अन्यथाष्टभुजोधत्ते मुख्यदक्षकरादिकैः ।
पद्मांकुशौ च मुसलं चक्रमत्युग्रतेजसम् ।।
शंखं च सशरं चापं पाशं कौमोदकीं क्रमात् ।

Pārameśvara Saṁhitā, Adh. 23, 48-49.
(ed. Shri Govindacharya, Tiruchi, 1953.)

33. Dave, K.B., *Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān*, Pl. 17.
34. Agrawal, Urmila, *Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance*, p. 57, Pl. XII.
35. मुख्यदक्षिणहस्तादि मुख्यवामकरावधि ।।
द्विरष्टबाहुमिर्धत्ते प्रादक्षिण्यक्रमेण तु ।
शक्तिं खड्गं तथा चाग्निमंङ्कुशं दण्डकुन्तके ।।
परशुं च सहस्रारं दरं च सशरंधनुः ।
पाशं हलं ततो वज्रं गदां च मुसलं तथा ।।
त्रिशूलमेतान्यिस्त्राणि प्रत्येकं वीर्यवन्ति च ।

Pārameśvara Saṁhitā, krīyā kāṇḍa, Adh. 23, 45-47.

36. *Nāradīya Mahā Purāṇa, Pūrva khaṇḍa, Adh.* 71, 62-66.
37. *Skanda Purāṇa, Vaiṣṇava khaṇḍa, Puruṣottama Mahātmya, Adh.* 28, 27-29.
38. *Nāradīya Mahā Purāṇa, Pūrva khaṇḍa, Adh.* 71, 51-55.
39. *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*, XXIX, 15-20.

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VĀMANA-TRIVIKRAMA

It is an established fact that the Vāmana myth has its germ in the "three steps" of Viṣṇu referred to in the *Rig-veda*.[1] Viṣṇu's feat of traversing the universe with his three steps is explicitly alluded to in the *Rig-veda*, I, 22, 17 :

इदं विष्णुर्विचक्रमे त्रैधानि दधे पदम् । समूकहस्य पांसुरे ॥
त्रीणि पदा विचक्रमे विष्णुर्गोपा अदाभ्यः । अतो धर्माणि धारयन् ॥

Griffith translates it as follows :

"Through all this (world) strode Viṣṇu, thrice his foot he planted and the whole was gathered in his footsteps' dust."

There is hardly any controversy about the interpretation of the three steps of Viṣṇu referred to above. His three steps could represent, as indicated by *Aurṇavābha*[2] and accepted by several scholars, the rising, the mid-day and the setting sun. Macdonell, agreeing with Bargaine, interprets the three steps "as the course of the solar deity through the three divisions of the universe."[3] "Within his three steps that are full of honey all beings dwell."[4]

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This feat of Viṣṇu is sometimes ascribed to his desire to be benevolent to men. He is said to have traversed the earthly spaces for men in distress.[5] "He who for man's behoof in his affection thrice measured out the earthly regions, Viṣṇu....."

R.V., VI, 49, 13.

At another place, Viṣṇu is applauded for traversing the earth to bestow it on men for inhabiting.[6]

"Over this earth with mighty step strode Viṣṇu, ready to give it for home to Manu. In him the humble people trust for safety ; the nobly born hath made them spacious dwelling."

R.V., VII, 100, 4.

A very similar idea is expressed in a hymn where he is said to have taken vast strides with Indra and stretched out the world for our existence.[7]

We may well ascribe the origin of the Vāmana-Trivikrama myth to this particular function of Viṣṇu. Not only that, Dr. V.S. Agrawal[8] traces the reference to the Vāmana Viṣṇu conception to a reference where "Vāmana is conceived as a *yuvā-kumāra,* or a young hero of beautiful form and Virāṭa Viṣṇu as a giant form."

R.V., I, 155, 6.

Later on with the legendary introduction of the fight between Devas and Dānavas as well as the supremacy of the Asura king Bali, the myth of Viṣṇu rescuing the world from the Asura domination, was woven round this very theme.

A remarkable point in the evolution of the basic concept of *avatāra* is its association with Viṣṇu right from its initial stages. Unlike other *avatāras,* Vāmana is not a separate entity later on synthesized with Viṣṇu, but it represents the essential and original aspect of the God.

The development of the myth starts from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.*[9] The gods and the Asuras were contending for supremacy, and the Asuras thought that they were the masters of the world. Thereupon, they got together and decided to divide the world amongst themselves. The gods, anxious to have their own share, rushed to the demons accompanied by Viṣṇu in the form of Sacrifice. The Asuras replied, "as much as this Viṣṇu lies upon, and no more, we give you."

Now Viṣṇu was a dwarf, hence the gods laid him on all the three directions and thus obtained the entire earth.

A similar legend is related in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*[10] and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.*[11] In the earlier versions of the story, referred to above, Viṣṇu, instead of

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measuring the world with the three steps, extends his steps to the three directions to obtain the possession of the entire earth.

The more evolved form of the myth of king Bali and Vāmana is, for the first time, referred to in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[12] Viṣṇu assumed the form of a dwarf in order to subdue the pride of the Asura king Bali. He approached him at the time when he was performing a sacrifice and asked for the gift of the land measuring the size of his three steps. When granted the boon, he enlarged himself into a wonderfully giant form and measured the entire earth with his three steps. King Bali was finally sent to rule the nether world.

The legend of the Vāmana incarnation is related in many *purāṇas*, the contents being almost similar in all of them.[13] It says that there ensued a fight between the Devas and the Asuras. Bali, the king of the Asuras, extended his authority over the three worlds inflicting an overall defeat on the gods. Viṣṇu assumed the form of a dwarf, at the request of the gods to restore them their former power, and approached king Bali at the time of the sacrifice. He asked Bali to give him as much space as could be measured by his three footsteps. King Bali, with all his generosity, agreed to offer him that boon in spite of all the warnings by his *guru* Śukrācārya. Viṣṇu, then enlarged himself to such great dimensions that he covered the three worlds with his three steps. King Bali was offered the sovereignty of *Pātāla* and ultimately the gods could regain their position.

The iconographical representation of Viṣṇu in this *avatāra* is mainly done in two ways. He is either to be sculptured as Vāmana or dwarf, depicting the earlier part of the story, or as Trivikrama—the dwarf grown into a gigantic stature measuring the three worlds with his three strides.

I

The iconography of Vāmana or the dwarfish form is simple but the descriptions given in the Sanskrit texts are varied. The image of Vāmana shows him either as a mendicant or a *brahmacārīn*. The only emblem to be held by Vāmana according to the *Viṣṇudharmottaram* is the staff. "The god Vāmana should have crooked limbs and a fat body. He carries the staff and is prepared for studies. His colour should be dark green like the *durvā* grass and he should wear an antelope skin."[14]

The *Agni Purāṇa* prescribes the umbrella and the staff as his emblems, if the figure of Vāmana is two-handed.[15]

The representation of Vāmana in any of these forms is rather rare. It may be noted that Vāmana figures, though not uncommon in the Gupta period, are not as numerous as those of the Varāha and Nṛsiṁha.

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A square stone, in the collection of the Allahabad Museum, contains a figure of Vāmana on a panel on one of its four sides. It is a pot-bellied dwarfish figure, wearing a loin-cloth reaching upto his knees. His hair, untied, is hanging down on his shoulders. His right hand is in the *varada-mudrā*, with an *akṣamālā*, whereas the left hand holds a *kamaṇḍalu*. The legs of this figure are too small in proportion to the whole body. The figure is a specimen of the Gupta art and is one of the earliest images of Vāmana so far found (Fig. 73). A similar figure of Vāmana is in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, represented on one side of a square stone, holding the *kamaṇḍalu* in one hand and the *akṣamālā* in the other.

Various later texts have described the figure of Vāmana holding the *kamaṇḍalu* and the umbrella in his hands. The *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa* specially attribues the figure of Vāmana with the *śikhā* and the *yajñopavīta*—the indication of a *brahmacārīn* or a mendicant. He should hold the umbrella and the *kamaṇḍalu* in his hands.[16]

The figure of Vāmana holding the umbrella and the *kamaṇḍalu* is invariably seen in the Daśāvatāra panels, but his separate representation in this form is not known, even though many texts on iconography have referred to it.

A panel projecting in the centre of the doorway of the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, represents a very peculiar image of Vāmana. The panel contains an image of Viṣṇu seated on a serpent in the centre. To his right is a small figure holding an umbrella in his right hand and his left hand is supposedly in the *varada-mudrā* (Fig. 19). It might represent Lord Viṣṇu revered and adored by his own incarnational form. An exactly similar representation of Vāmana is also found at the Udayagiri caves at Bhubaneshwar.[17] The figure of Vāmana in this panel is to the left of Viṣṇu rather than to the right.

The image of Vāmana could be four-handed, but the emblems in his hands differ according to different texts.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* gives quite a detailed description of the image. The emblems to be held by the deity are the umbrella, the staff (*daṇḍa*), and the *kamaṇḍalu* full of water in his three hands, while the fourth hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā*. He wears an antelope skin, the *yajñopavīta*, etc.[18]

Sometimes he holds the emblems which are in no way relevant to the role he plays as an *avatāra*. For instance, according to the *Paurāṇakarma*, he should hold the *śārṅga*, the bow and the arrow in his three hands. The emblem to be held in the fourth hand is not mentioned.[19]

The *Gāndharva Tantra* imagines the image of Vāmana just like that of ordinary Viṣṇu images, holding the peculiar emblems of Viṣṇu.

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"Baṭuka (Vāmana) has lotus-like eyes and fair golden colour. He should hold in his four hands the mace, the conch, the lotus and the disc."[20]

A number of the four-handed mediaeval images of Vāmana holding the emblems of Viṣṇu are available. It deserves attention that the early images of Vāmana, like the description given in the early texts cited above, are invariably two-handed.[21]

A very significant point to be noted here is the fact that side by side with three Vāmana images there is to be found one of the series of twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu (also designated as Vāmana), holding his four peculiar emblems. This poses the question whether such images should be considered as the representation of the Vāmana *avatāra* of Viṣṇu or as one of his *caturviṁśati* forms.

If we examine such images in detail, we notice that the execution of the figure of any of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu is always proportionate, every limb being in equal proportion to the whole body. Whereas the figures of Vāmana show a deliberate deformation of the body, particularly the legs and the belly. It is always a pot-bellied figure with rather short legs indicating a dwarf. This is the only discriminating point to decide whether the image is that of Vāmana incarnation or of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu. A striking point here is the position of emblems held by the image, which are exactly in compliance with the positions of the emblems prescribed for the Vāmana form of Viṣṇu by several texts.[22] According to the *Padma Purāṇa* and the *Rūpamaṇḍana* it should hold, starting from the lower right, the lotus or the rosary, the mace, the disc and the conch in its four hands. The order of *āyudhas* held by the Vāmana *avatāra* of Viṣṇu is also the same, as will be shown below. Hence, it may safely be concluded that such images show an attempt to synthesize the two aspects of Viṣṇu viz. the *vyūha* and the *vibhāva*. It is just the fancy of the sculptors of the mediaeval period who tried to combine the two aspects of the god in one image, because no such representation of Vāmana has come to light before the mediaeval period.

A beautiful four-handed image of Vāmana, pot-bellied standing on a lotus pedestal, datable to the 9th century A.D., is preserved in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras, the lower right hand is in the *varada-mudrā*, the rest of the hands hold the mace, the disc and the conch. Śrīdevī and Saraswati flank him and below on the pedestal are represented the devotees with folded hands (Fig. 74).

A very similar image from Dinagpur, is now in the collection of the Asutosh Museum (No. 5621). A plump small figure holding the lotus in the *varada-mudrā*, the mace, the disc and the conch, stands on lotus pedestal flanked by Śrī and Sarasvati.[23]

The Vāmana figure flanked by the goddesses Śrī and Sarasvati is described in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*.[24] It says : "Fair like the moon, wearing yellow garments, standing

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on Garuḍa, the four-handed god holds in his upper right hand the mace, in the lower right hand the pot of water,[25] in the upper left hand the flaming disc, and in the lower left the conch. His chest is marked with *Śrīvatsa* and the *kaustubha*. He has on his left side the quiver full of arrows, and on his right side the Nandaka sword. He is adorned with a tiara, earrings and *vanamālā* reaching upto his knees. To his right side stands Śrī and to his left Sarasvati."

So far no image of Vāmana carrying the quiver is available, but an image with the Nandaka sword attached to the belt has come to light from Narwar, datable to the 11th century A.D. now in the Gwalior Museum. The small figure of Vāmana is carrying the mace, the disc and the conch in his three hands, the fourth being in *varada-mudrā*. The long ear-lobes and the curly hair remind one of the Buddha figures. A donor couple, devotees and *āyudha-puruṣas* flank the central figure. Around the panel are depicted the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, also Brahmā and Śiva, and on the top is an unidentified figure in *dhyāna-mudrā*.[26]

At times, the hair of Vāmana arranged in curls with a top knot, indicate him to be a mendicant as seen in the image in the Gwalior Museum. Vāmana is standing on a lotus with serpents below it. He holds his usual emblems and is flanked by Gadā-devi and Śankha-Puruṣa represented as *caurī-roṁ*. One additional feature is the small dagger attached to the belt of Vāmana (Fig. 75).

The Sanskrit Vidyapith, Varanasi, has a fine image with curly hair and the top-knot or *uṣṇīsa*. This image datable to the 10th century A.D. holds in his upper two hands the mace and the disc, the lower two hands are mutilated. On either side appear much mutilate d *āyudha-puruṣas*.

The Vamana temple at Khajuraho contains a similar figure published by Urmila Agrawal.[27]

In the Jhalawar Museum (No. 12) and the Jaipur Museum (No. 11201) also similar images of Vāmana are exhibited.

Later Tantric texts, like *Meru Tantra*, describe a very peculiar form of Vāmana, termed Dadhi Vāmana. The text prescribes that Vmana should carry pots, full of curds and water in his hands. The idea behind this form seems to indicate Vāmana symbolizing the creative principle of life as represented by the water and curd. According to the same text, Vāmana should be meditated upon as standing under the golden umbrella flanked by the goddesses Śrī and Bhūmi. He should hold in his left hand a golden pot filled with water.[28] The description of Vāmana in the *Śāradātilaka* is almost the same.[29]

So far no such image of Vāmana has come to light.

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II

The mythology of the Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu has been more frequently represented as Trivikrama when Viṣṇu suddenly grew into the *Virāṭa* form from the dwarf form, to measure the whole world.

The image to be executed according to the *Viṣṇudharmottaram* is very peculiar. It says :

"The image of Trivikrama should be like the cloud laden with water, (of dark shade) and in his eight hands he holds the staff, the noose, the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus. With his other two hands he should blow the conch."[30]

The *Matsya Purāṇa*,[31] the *Mānasollāsa*[32] etc. do not throw much light on the iconography of the Trivikrama image, hence for the most part we have to rely on the *Vaikhānasāgama* and the *Atri Saṁhitā*.

The *Vaikhānasāgama*[33] divides the image of Trivikrama into three varieties according to the level of the upraised left foot. It should either be to the level of the right knee, to the navel or to the forehead, intended to represent him in the act of striding over the three worlds. It should have either four or eight hands. If he is four-armed, one of the right hands holds the conch, and one of the left hands holds the disc. One of the right hands should be held up with the palm upwards, and the other left hand should be stretched out paralled to the uplifted leg.

If the image is eight-handed, then five of his hands should carry the conch, the disc, the mace, the bow and the plough and the others carry the symbols of the four-handed image. His right leg should be firmly planted upon the earth and the left should be used in taking the stride. Indra should be shown to be holding an umbrella over Trivikrama's head. Varuṇa, Vāyu, Sūrya and Candra attend on him with fly-whisk. Brahmā should be shown washing the uplifted leg of Trivikrama. Śiva with folded hands should be sculptured on the panel. Below his left leg is represented the dwarfish figure of Vāmana with an umbrella in his hands, ready to receive the grant of his wish from king Bali who stands opposite to him holding a water vessel indicating that he is ready to pour the sacred water as an act of final dedication. Śukrācārya, his *guru*, should also be present there.

From the Katra Kesavadev at Mathura has come a panel showing the Trivikrama incarnation of Viṣṇu (assignable to the early Gupta period), now preserved in the Mathura Museum (No. 2664). It is very difficult to describe the image in detail because the panel is in a badly mutilated condition. A figure is seen with his left leg stretched aloft at the end of which is seen a demon head.[34] The demon head typifies the Brahmāṇḍa in the opinion of Dr. V.S. Agrawal.

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A panel on the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, in all probability, represents the Trivikrama. To the right is a figure seated on a raised platform, while on the left is another figure with the right foot firmly planted on the ground and the left foot aslant. Between them is the bust of a young ascetic. The person on the throne raising his right hand in the *abhaya-mudrā* is evidently Bali approached by Vāmana for the gift. The gift being granted, he turned himself into a gigantic figure seen on the left side of the panel.[35]

A very interesting image of Trivikrama has been found from Rajim, in the Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh. The four-handed god holds in his upper two hands the disc and the conch. The lower right hand is in the *kaṭihasta-mudrā*. He is shown to be crushing the demon head with his lower left hand and also by his vigorously outstretched left leg. Below the left leg is represented the serpent Śeṣa, seated in human form on his own coils with his hands in the *añjali-mudrā*. No other accessory figure attends the deity. This figure dates back to the early 7th century.[36]

There are two fine Pala specimens of the Trivikrama incarnation in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta. One of them (M. No. A 25179) represents the whole episode in its minutest details. The god stands with his right leg firmly planted on the pedestal and the left leg raised upto the waist. His upper two hands hold the mace and the disc, the lower right hand near his waist holds the lotus and the mutilated left hand probably held the conch. Below on his right side is the goddess Śrī. To the left, under his left leg is seen Vāmana holding an umbrella in his hand. The king holds a water-pot in his right hands as if pouring the sacrificial water symbolising his readiness to offer the gift to Vāmana (Fig. 77). This scene depicts the earlier part of the legend when Vāmana approached the king at the time of sacrifice. As soon as the king gave him the gift by symbolically pouring water, he assumed the *Virāṭa* or gigantic form depicted in the main sculpture. It is a vivid execution of the particular scene described in the *Harivaṁśa*, in the line :

तोये तु पतिते हस्ते वामनोऽभूदवामनः ।

III, 71, 43.

There are the queen and other attendants standing by the side of the king. On the pedestal below is represented a horse tied to the *yūpa*, indicating the horse sacrifice performed by Bali.

Another image in the same Museum[37] (M. No. A 25187) is almost identical to the one described above.

Trivikrama holds the disc and the mace in his right hands, the conch in the upper left hand and shows the *tarjanī-mudrā* with his lower left hand, possibly giving a warning or threat to the king. Below the left leg of the god is shown the king seated on the throne, offering his gift to Vāmana.

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A peculiar image from Abdullapur, in Bengal, depicts Trivikrama in accompaniment of the consorts of Viṣṇu—Śrī and Sarasvati. The ornate figure of Trivikrama holds the mace, the disc and the conch in his hands. The right leg is firmly planted on the lotus pedestal and the left is raised aloft, with the miniature figures of the king and the dwarf below it. On either side of the god appear Śrī and Sarasvati standing on lotuses.[38]

In the group of temples at Osian, near Jodhpur in Rajasthan, are preserved some representations of Trivikrama. One on the outer wall of the Sachia Mata Temple, shows the four-handed Trivikrama crushing the head of the demon with his left leg raised aloft. Of the four hands, his lower right hand is in the *kaṭihasta-mudrā*, the upper right holds the disc and the lower left holds the conch. Below his left leg are the king making his offering, Vāmana with an open umbrella and other attendant figures. A figure, evidently the king, is shown holding the right leg of the god and above him appears a horse symbolising the horse-sacrifice (Fig. 76).

There is an interesting image of Trivikrama, preserved in the Ajmer Museum The iconography of the image is almost identical with the ones described above, with the exception that its facial expression is fierce.[39]

The eight-handed variety of the Trivikram aimage described by the *Vaikhānasāgama* and the *Atri Saṁhitā* rarely finds its sculptural expression.

A fragment of the lintel of a gateway at Pawaya in Gwalior is a very interesting execution of the legend of Vāmana-Trivikrama. The whole panel is divided into three parts. The one on the right represents musicians and dancing girl. The middle part of the panel depicts the harem with ladies on the top rows. On the right side of the lower most row are two *ṛtvijas* performing sacrifice in a *Vedi* before them. The king and the queen are also seated opposite the *vedī*. The horse of the Aśvamedha Sacrifice is also tied to a *yūpa* in front. To the left of the same row is seen the king with the Brahmins offering the boon to Vāmana represented as a dwarf, by pouring water on his hand. The left panel represents the final part of the legend where Vāmana has turned into Trivikrama. Unfortunately, it is broken and only a part has survived The eight-handed god holds in his right hands the dagger, the disc, the staff (?) and one is placed on the chest. In the upper left hand he is probably holding the garland, and the rest are broken. He is flanked by two *caurī*-bearers. On the top on the right side can be seen the sun riding his horses. This panel, belonging to the 4th century A.D., is important both from iconographical as well as stylistic point of view. Eight-handed images are very rarely met with in the Gupta period and this is the earliest eight-handed Trivikrama known to us. Stylistically the panel is very similar to the Amaravati sculptures, indicating the possibility of the prevalence of the same school in Western India also.

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The Gwalior Museum, however, has one eight-handed Trivikrama image from Ghusai, datable to the 10th century. In the right hands, starting from the top are placed the disc, the lotus, the sword, and the mace. In his left hands in the same order, appear the shield, the bow and the conch, one of the hands being mutilated. The left leg of the god is extended upto his shoulder. Below it are seen the dwarf with an umbrella, the king making the offering and an attendant figure. Near the king stands his *guru* Śukrācārya, forbidding him to offer anything to Vāmana (Fig. 78).

In a niche of the temple of Modhera in Gujarat also appears an eight-handed image of Trivikrama.[40] Only the disc and the mace and the conch in the three of his four right hands are visible; the left ones being completely mutilated nothing could be said about the emblems held by them. Near his right leg is a figure with folded hands, and below his left leg appear Vāmana, Bali and Śukrācārya as in other images. The left leg of the god ends in the mouth of a demon head.

The image of eight-handed Trivikrama has been found at Kathmandu in Nepal dated to the 5th century A.D. by Stella Kramrisch.[41] The right hands of the image appear as follows : The upper one is in the *abhaya-mudrā*; the others hold the disc and the mace, and the last is in *kaṭihasta-mudrā*. The emblems in the left hands are not clear. Two Nāga figures are clinging to the right leg of the god. Under the outstretched left leg of Trivikrama the king is shown offering something to Vāmana. The queen with folded hands stands by the side of the king.

A unique representation of Trivikrama has come to light from Chamba,[42] on a panel to the east of the northern side of the Makula Devi temple at Lahul. The outstretched left leg of the god goes even beyond his head and reaches heaven. The extended toes of his right foot touch the snake gods of the nether sregime who are represented in the form of a four-handed human being with serpent hoods. The upper right hand of the figure on the right touches the foot of Trivikrama but the emblems in its other hands are not clear. Beneath the left leg of Trivikrama the dwarf is depicted with an umbrella in his left hand standing before king Bali, who is seated on a small throne. Two figures in front of them holding the sword and the shield are probably guards. In the upper region are seen the gods grouped in three rows.

The gods are not easy to identify because the sculptor does not seem to have followed the canon of Hindu iconography. The three-faced figure in the right upper corner must be Brahmā, holding the staff, the rosary, the water vessel and seated on two *haṁsas*. Next to him is a figure holding the trident, the rosary and the vessel mounted on two parrots. Another figure on a buffalo carries the skull, sceptre and the flag and may be Yama. The last figure on the same row, equipped with a sword and shield and seated cross-legged on a prostrate Yakṣa, may be Kubera. The only preserved figure in the second row carries the bow, the lotus, the plough and the conch, and may represent Balarāma. The figure in the third row is evidently Sūrya on his chariot. The main figure of Trivikrama holds the lotus, the disc, the mace and

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the conch in his four hands. The most remarkable feature of this image is the presence of the boar and the lion-face to the left and the right of the main figure, as in the Vaikuṇṭha images of Viṣṇu. It is a composite figure combining the Trivikrama, Varāha and the Nṛsiṁha *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, and hence is of unique importance in the history of the iconography of Viṣṇu.

Vāmana and Trivikrama images, though scattered all over Northern India, do not exhibit many varieties or much evolution and elaboration from the iconographic point of view. The two-handed Vāmana figures are commonly found in the Gupta period, the four-handed variety being an evolution of the mediaeval period. The Vāmana images, but for some minor differences, are almost the same irrespective of their provenance. The Trivikrama images are usually of four-handed variety. This variety of Trivikrama images is more popular in the north of India,but in the south the eight-handed variety seems to be more common even in the Gupta period. The Trivikrama images from Ellora and the Badami caves are eight-handed.[43]

The Vāmana worship must have been in vogue right from the third or the fourth century of the Christian era. The *Mahābhārata* refers to a *tīrtha* called Vāmana Tīrtha, which must have been a prominent place of pilgrimage. The *Vāmana Purāṇa* also mentions that the Koṭa Tīrtha enshrined Vāmana, somewhere in the Kuruksetra region.[44] The Junagadh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta, referring to the temple of Viṣṇu erected in the year 456 A.D. by Cakrapālita, the son of Praṇadatta who was appointed the Viceroy of Saurashtra by Skandagupta, opens with the invocation of Viṣṇu in his Vāmana incarnation.[45] Kalidasa in the *Raghuvaṁśa* alludes to the difficult task of Vāmana, comparing it with his own,[46] in the opening of the first canto.

The survey in the foregoing pages makes it amply clear that Vāmana, like the Varāha aud Nṛsiṁha incarnations, must have been much worshipped by the people right from the Gupta period. Though no shrine dedicated to Vāmana has come to light so far, it is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. But in spite of its important position in the field of religion, Vāmana does not seem to have formed a cult which could have been reflected by the elaborate iconographical forms in the following periods.

Notes

1. Macdonell, A.A., *Vedic Mythology*, p. 39.
   See also Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 145.
2. Yaska, *Nirukta*, 12, 19. Commentary by Aurṇavābha.
3. Macdonell, A.A., *op. cit.*, p. 38.
4. यस्यत्री पूर्णा मधुना पदान्यक्षीयमाणा स्वधया मदन्ति ।
   य उ त्रिधातु पृथिवीमुत द्यामेको दाधार भुवनानि विश्वा ॥
   R.V., I, 154, 4.

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5. यो रजांसि विममे पार्थिवानि त्रिष्चिद्विष्णुर्मनवे बाधिताय ।
तस्य ते शर्मन्नुपदधमाने रायामदेम तन्वा३ तना च ।।

R.V., VI, 49, 13.

6. विचक्रमे पृथिवीमेष एतां क्षेत्राय विष्णुर्मनुषे दशस्यन् ।
घृवासो अस्य कीरयो जनास उरूक्षिति सुजनिमाचकार ।।

R.V., VII, 100, 4.

7. *R.V.*, VI, 69, 5.
8. Agrawal, V.S., *op. cit.*, p. 61.
9. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I, 2, 5.
10. *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, II, 1, 3.
11. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, I, 6, 1.

12. वैरोचनिमुपागम्य त्रीन याचत् पदक्रमान्।
लब्ध्वा च त्रीन् पदान् विष्णुः कृत्वारूपमथाद्भुतम् ।।
त्रिणिः क्रमैस्तथा लोकानाजहार त्रिविक्रमः ।
एकेन हि पदा कृत्स्नां पृथिवीं सोऽध्यतिष्ठति ।।
द्वितीयेनाव्ययं व्योमं द्यां तृतीयेन राघव ।
तं च बद्धाञ्जलि कृत्वा पातालतलवासिनम् ।।

Rāmāyaṇa, I, 27, 12-14.

13. *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*, III, 58-68; *Matsya Purāṇa, adh.* 161-167; *Agni Purāṇa*, adh. 5; *Padma Purāṇa, adh.* 266-67; *Vāmana Purāṇa, adh.* 23-31.

14. कर्त्तव्यो वामनो देवः संकटैर्गात्रपर्वभिः ।
पीनगात्रश्च कर्त्तव्यो दण्डी चाध्ययनोद्यतः ।।

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 54.

15. छत्रीदण्डी वामनः स्यादथवा स्याच्चतुर्भुजः ।

Agni Purāṇa, adh. 49, 5.

16. कृष्णाजिनोपवीतः स्याच्छत्री धृतकमण्डलु ।
कुण्डली शिखयायुक्तः कुब्जाकारो मनोहरः ।

Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, V, 71.

Also compare *Mānasollāsa*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda, 1939, III, 1, 697-698. *Śilparatna*, 25, 111, 112.

17. Danielou Alain, *Hindu Polytheism*, Pl. XI.

18. छत्रं सदण्डं सजलं कमण्डलुं-
विवेद विप्रद्धयमेधवाहम् ।।
मौञ्जया मेखलयावीतमुपवीत जिनोत्तरम् ।
जटिलं वामनं विप्र मायामाणवकं हरिम् ।।

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII, 18, 23-24.

19. नमः शार्ङ्गधनुर्बाण पाणये वामनाय च ।

Paurāṇakarma (Jagat Samachar Press, Thana), III, 3.

20. बटुकः कमलाक्षस्तु स्वर्णगौर चतुर्भुजः ।
गदां च पद्मं च चक्रं चापि दधत्करैः ।।

Gāndharva Tantra, Kak & Shastri, Srinagar, 1934, 19, 6-7.

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21. Also compare :

...द्विभुजं छत्रदण्डधरं कौपीनवाससम् शिखापुस्तकमेखलोपवीत-
कृष्णाजिनसमायुक्तं पवित्रपाणिनं बालरूपिणं..... ॥

Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 58, p. 199.

22. See the Appendix.
23. Banerjea, J.N., *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Pl. XXIII, 1.
24. *Kālikā Purāṇa*, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1908, 83, 16-21.
25. *Rūpamaṇḍana* also prescribes a water pot in his hand.
26. Annual Administration Report of the Archaeological Department, Gwalior, 1936, Pl. VI a.
27. Agrawal, Urmila, *Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance*, Pl. 14.
28. ज्वलन्मयूखकनकच्छत्राधः पुण्डरीकगम् ।
पूर्णचन्द्रनिभं ध्यायेच्छ्रीभूम्याश्लिष्ट पार्श्वकम् ॥
दध्यन्नं वामहस्तेन स्वर्णस्य चषकं दधत् ॥

Meru Tantra, 26, 341-342.

29. *Śārdātilaka*, (ed.) Pandit, M.J.B., Benaras, 1934, 15, 56-60.
30. दूर्वाश्याम च कर्त्तव्यः कृष्णाजिनधरस्तथा ।
सजलाम्बुदसंकाशस्तथा कार्यस्त्रिविक्रमः ॥
दण्डपाशधरः कार्यः शंखसच्चुम्बिताधरः ।
शंखचक्रगदा (पद्मा:) कार्यास्तस्य स्वरूपिणः ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 55-56.

31. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 260, 36-38.
32. *Mānasollāsa*, III, 1, 712-714.
33. त्रिविक्रमं त्रिधा प्रोक्तं लोके त्रिपदविन्यासात् भूलोकात् क्रमेण
ललाटसीमान्तमुद्धृतमैतैर्यथेष्टानि रूपं निश्चित्य...देवं
चतुर्बाहुमष्टभुजं वाष्टभुजं चेद् दक्षिणे चक्रासिशक्तिधरं वामे
खेटकशार्ङ्गहलमुसलधरं मेवमष्टभुजं चतुर्भुजो दक्षिणे चक्रं वामे
शंखं तद्विपरीतं स्ववामपादं दक्षिणं स्थितं वामं प्रसारितं
दक्षिणमुत्तानकरं वामग्रसारितपादेनसह प्रसारितं श्यामाभं
रक्ताम्बरधरं सर्वाभरणभूषितं...

Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 58, p. 200.

34. Agrawal, V.S., Brahmanical Images in Mathura, *JISOA*, Vol. V, 1937, p. 124.
35. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, p. 20, Pl. XIX b.
36. Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Part I, Pl. XLVIII.
37. Banerji, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, Pl. XLVII d.
38. Bhattasali, N.K., *Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Images in the Dacca Museum*, Pl. XXXVIII.

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39. Dave, K.B., *Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān*, p. 201.
40. Burgess and Cousens, *Archaeological Antiquities of Northern Gujarat*, Pl. LVI.
41. Kramrisch, Stella, *The Art of Nepal*, Vienna, 1964, Pl. II.
42. Goetz, Hermann, *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, Pl. XVI.
43. Yasoda Devi, Vāmana-Trivikrama, *Journal of the Indian History*, Dec. 1965, Vol. XLIII, pp. 836-845.
44. Agrawal, V.S., *op. cit.*, p. 66.
45. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, pp. 58-59.
46. Kalidasa, *Raghuvaṁśa*, I, 3.

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PARAŚURĀMA

All the five *avatāras* discussed above obtained importance largely owing to their symbolic significance rooted in the ancient past. But Paraśurāma is a real historical figure, probably a great warrior of a particular tribe, later on deified and exalted to the position of an incarnation of a very prominent and ᵾ popular god. Hence, with the advent of Paraśurāma some historicity is introduced into the *avatāra* cycle of Viṣṇu.

Pāṇinī[1] mentions a tribe or people known as Paraśus, but whether there is any relation between Paraśurāma and that tribe is difficult to say because Paraśurāma is used merely as a proper noun and besides in earlier references we find him designated only as Rāma, Bhārgava or Jāmadagneya. He is called Paraśurāma probably because of his association with the Paraśu or axe—his weapon—with which he killed his mother at the command of his father.[2]

Unfortunately, the initial stages of the development of the story of Paraśurāma are lost and what we find in the earliest known references is a full-fledged myth of the deified Paraśurāma.

The famous story of Paraśurāma is related in detail in the *Mahābhārata*, III, 116. The sage Jāmadagni had five sons by Reṇukā, the last of them being Rāma.

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Once, when Reṇukā had gone to the riverside to fetch fruit for the sacrifice, she saw king Citraratha sporting merrily in the river. Reṇukā waited for a while to witness the scene. When she returned to the hermitage excited with impure thoughts, the sage turned her out and ordered his sons, one after another, to kill her. Failing to carry out his orders, the first four sons were cursed to death. Rāma, the youngest of all, obeyed his father and proceeded to kill his mother. Pleased with this deed, Jāmadagni offered a boon to his son. Paraśurāma asked for the resurrection of his mother and brothers.

Once king Kārtavīrya came to the hermitage of Jāmadagni and forcibly took away their cows. So Paraśurāma went and killed the king. To avenge their father's death, Kārtavīrya's sons murdered the sage in the absence of Paraśurāma, who later on took an oath to destroy the whole of the Kṣatriya race. He undertook his campaign of destruction twenty-one times.

It may be briefly noted that the character of Paraśurāma is represented unfavourably in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He is defeated by the Dāśarathī Rāma,[3] which may be the result of an attempt to establish the supremacy of the Kṣatriyas over the Brāhmaṇas.

This *avatāra* hardly attained any importance among the worshippers of Viṣṇu, but in the *avatāra* panels he gets his place.

The iconography of Paraśurāma is simple and unvaried. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottaram* he should have a *jaṭā* on his head and his only emblem is the axe.[4] The *Agni Purāṇa* prescribes four hands to the image of Paraśurāma holding the bow, the arrow, the axe and the sword.[5]

The *Vaikhānasāgama* describes two varieties of the image of this *avatāra*. One is two-handed and the other is four-handed.[6] The two-handed image should have the axe in the right hand and the left hand should be in the *śuci-mudrā*. He should wear *Jaṭāmukuṭa, Yajñopavīta* and other ornaments. If the image is four-handed, it should hold the usual attributes of Viṣṇu.

An image has been discovered in Timba, a village near Amreli in Gujarat, belonging to the Gupta period. It is a mutilated piece and hence its exact identification is difficult but an axe in the right hand of the figure indicates that it may be the representation of Paraśurāma.[7] If the identification is correct, the image is the earliest document to testify to the prevalence of Paraśurāma worship in Gujarat.

On the left outside wall of the Parsvanatha temple at Khajuraho[8] are two images possibly of Paraśurāma, both of them holding a fruit (citron ?), the conch, the lotus and the battle-axe. The attributes of these images are quite different from the attributes suggested by the Sanskrit texts cited above.

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A beautiful image of Paraśurāma has been reproduced by Bhattasali, N.K.[9] The god holds in his upper two hands the battle-axe and the disc, the lower right hand is in *varada-mudrā* and the lower left hand holds the conch. Below on the pedestal is a small figure of Garuḍa with folded hands. This image, standing in the *tribhañga* pose, is a fine specimen of the 11th century art of eastern India.

A late mediaeval image of four-handed Paraśurāma is found from Chamba. He holds the mace and the conch in the lower hands and the upper ones hold the battle-axe and the bow (Fig. 79).

There is a very peculiar representation of Paraśurāma at Basohli, on the opposite wall of the Baoli of Dhan, three miles away from Thara-Kadwal on the way to Kuhn. The second panel on the wall beginning from the upper end depicts a fight between two persons, one of whom is multi-armed and the other carries a battle-axe in his right hand. With the left hand he has caught the hair of his opponent. Only five of the multiple hands of the other figure are visible carrying the mace, the sword, the kukri, the dagger, etc. This obviously depicts the fight between Paraśurāma and Kārtavīrya Arjuna.[10] The image belongs to the late mediaeval period.

The images of Paraśurāma are very few in number. All those that have come to light are also datable to the mediaeval period. The utter absence of Paraśurāma images, excepting these stray ones, makes it obvious that this *avatāra* exerted only a limited influence on the Vaiṣṇava devotees. This being a minor *avatāra*, temples were not usually dedicated to him. There are a couple of temples of Paraśurāma in Gujarat[11] probably owing to his traditional association with the river Narmadā where Jāmadagni's hermitage was supposed to have been situated.

Notes

1. *Pāṇinī*, V, 3, 119.
2. तत आदाय परशुं रामो मातुः शिरोऽहरत् ॥

   Mahābhārata, III, 116, 14.
3. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I, 71.
4. कार्यस्तु भार्गवो रामो जटामण्डलदुर्दशः ॥
   हस्तेऽस्य परशुः कार्यः कृष्णाजिनधरस्य तु ।

   Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 61-62.
5. रामश्चापेषुहस्तः स्यात्खड्गी परशुनान्वितः ॥

   Agni Purāṇa, 49, 5.

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6. जामदग्निरामं ...द्विभुजं रक्ताभं श्वेतवस्त्रधरं दक्षिणेन
हस्तेन परशुधरं वाममुद्देश्यकरं जटामुकुटं सोपवीतिनं सर्वाभरण
भूषितं स्थापयेत् । नद्रूप विष्णु चतुर्भुजं वा ।

Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 59, p. 200.

7. Dave, K.B., *Gujarātnu Mūrti Vidhān*, p. 203.
8. Agrawal, Urmila, *Khajuraho Sculptures and Their Significance*, p. 29.
9. Bhattasali, N.K., *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Pl. XXXIX.
10. Kak, R.C., Antiquities of Basohli and Ramnagar, *Indian Arts and Letters*, Vol. VII, No. 2, 1933, p. 83.
11. Dave, K.B , *op. cit.*, pp 203-209.

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RĀMA-DĀŚARATHĪ

The legend of Rāma which has greatly influenced Indian culture and religion, must have had a long history before it was incorporated in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but its threads are loose and do not allow us to trace its origin and evolution. Rāma himself never figures in the pre-*Rāmāyaṇa* literature. Janaka is often mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*[1] but there is hardly any justification for the supposition that he is the same Janaka who is the father-in-law of Rāma.

The term Sītā occurs in the *Rig-veda*, IV, 57, 6, where it signifies the "furrow". The character of Sītā reflected in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is not connected with a fertility cult, nor do we find her in any way associated with agriculture. Her only epithet "*bhūmisutā*" is not sufficient to prove her identity with "Sītā" of the Veda. In the opinion of the scholars like Weber and Winternitz, Sītā of the *Rig-veda* is "separated by a wide gulf from the Sītā of the *Rāmāyaṇa*."[2]

It seems quite probable that Rāma must have been a Kṣatriya hero, eulogized by the court bards of ancient times. As Macdonell has surmised, "In Ayodhya, then, there must have been current among the court bards (*suta*) a number of epic tales narrating the fortunes of the Ikṣvāku hero Rāma. Such legends, we may assume, Vālmikī worked up in a single homogeneous production—*Rāmāyaṇa*."[3]

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself, excepting the later interpolations,[4] Rāma is merely a great hero portrayed as an ideal son, husband and king. Later on he was deified and

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accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. In the genuine portion of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* he is at the most likened to Viṣṇu but never represented as an incarnation. Winternitz has propounded the theory that in Book II and VI, apart from a few passages which are doubtless interpolated, Rāma is always treated as a mortal, and in the indisputably genuine parts of the epic there is no indication whatsoever of his being conceived as an incarnation.[5] Fr. Bulcke has thoroughly studied the evolution of the Rāma legend and has come to the conclusion that Rāma was originally a hero later on deified and identified with Viṣṇu.[6]

The legend of Rāma is too well-known to receive detailed attention here. The *Mahābhārata* version is similar to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Purāṇas* also follow the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmikī in treating Rāma's life.

The image of Rāma, according to the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, should be adorned with all the royal marks of a king. His brothers Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna are also to be carved in the same manner but without the tiara.[7]

In the *Agni Purāṇa* Rāma is described as holding the bow, the arrow, the sword and the conch.[8]

It is rather surprising that we do not meet with such cult images of Rāma, described above, in the early centuries of the Christian era, but *Rāmāyaṇa* had such a great impact on the people that various episodes from the life of Rāma are profusely carved on the walls of the early temples. So far, no shrine dedicated to Rāma has come to light before the mediaeval period. Though no cult image of Rāma has come to light before that period, it will be interesting to describe here some of the panels on the outer walls of temples, depicting the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes.

The Transformation of Ahalyā : Rāma transformed Ahalyā into a woman, who was cursed by her husband to turn into a stone in the forest till Rāma would come and redeem her.[9]

A panel on the plinth of the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh represents this episode. The background of the panel is covered with trees and leaves indicating a forest scene. On the left of the panel is a figure with matted hair having a quiver behind his shoulders and a bow in his left hand. He is shown to be seated on a stone slab by the side of which appears a female figure worshipping him. She must be Ahalyā who was transformed to stone by her husband. Lakṣmaṇa with a bow in his hand is standing behind Rāma. The bearded figure to the right is the sage Viśvāmitra (Fig. 80).

The same scene is also carved on the wall of the Patthara Ghati temple at Nalanda. On the fourth panel of the east face is a two-armed standing male figure,

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apparently Rāma, holding an arrow in the right hand and a bow in the left hand. A kneeling female with folded hands is seated to the right of Rāma. A tree and little foliage in the background indicate it be a forest scene (Fig. 82).

Crossing the river : There is a beautiful representation of the *Crossing of the river* scene in the collection of the Indian Museum, datable to the 10th century. A royal figure is seated in the middle of a boat under an umbrella, flanked by an elephant on the right side and a horseman holding a *cāmara* on the left. He could be Rāma crossing the river with Guha following the path. Near the rudder appear the boatmen one of whom wears a crown indicating him to be the king Guha. Apart from being the representation of a rare *Rāmāyaṇa* scene the artistically-treated boat is important.

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā in Exile : A panel on the Dasavatara temple shows three figures walking side by side. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are holding bow in their hands. It illustrates Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā going into the forest in exile.[10]

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā in the forest : A panel of the stone temple at Nalanda depicts Rāma and Sītā in Pañcavatī. A male and a female figure are seated side by side as if conversing with each other. The male figure wearing a *channavīra* is holding a bow under his left arm.

Rāma's Visit to the Hermitage of Atri : Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā had visited the hermitage of Atri and his wife Anasūyā, on their way to the forest.[11] One of the panels illustrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes on the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, represents three male and two female figures in the grove. Two men are sitting on stone slabs and the third one—Lakṣmaṇa—is standing between them armed with a bow. The figure on the right holds the manuscript in his hand and the other one is in the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*, indicating him to be a sage. One of the female figures is seated on the floor on a mat and is being blessed by another female figure, representing Anasūyā blessing Sītā.[12]

Lakṣmaṇa Mutilating Śūrpaṇakhā : Śūrpaṇakhā, the sister of Rāvaṇa, was enamoured by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa when she saw them in the forest. Hence she went there and tried to lure them away but could not succeed. Thinking that Sītā is the cause of her failure, she tried to harass her and consequently Lakṣmaṇa got so angry that he cut her nose.[13]

This popular incident is also depicted on the wall of the Dasavatara temple. The panel shows on its right side Rāma with one of his hands raised up and the other holding a bow. Lakṣmaṇa has seized Śūrpaṇakhā by her hair and one of his hands armed with a sword is raised up so as to hit her. Sītā, terrified at the sight, has placed one of her hands on her breast (Fig. 81).

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The same episode is also represented on the Paharpur temple[14] as well as a temple at Sahet-Mahet.[15]

Rāma Killing Demons : During his stay in the forest Rāma had to kill many demons. A panel on the Dasavatara temple illustrates Rāma shooting at the demons with a bow and an arrow and Lakṣmaṇa is standing near him as his guard.[16]

Abduction of Sītā : The famous episode of the *Rāmāyaṇa*—the abduction of Sītā[17]—also finds its place in this series. The panel is, however, fragmentary. There is a female bust and round its right shoulder is seen a gigantic male hand. The female figure has a very terrified expression and hence in all probability, it represents Rāvaṇa abducting Sītā.[18]

Lakṣmaṇa Garlanding Sugrīva : Rāma helped Sugrīva, the ape-king, to regain his power which was forcibly taken away by his own brother Vāli. Lakṣmaṇa garlanded him for his victory.[19]

A panel on the Dasavatara temple illustrates this. Lakṣmaṇa is holding a garland in his hand intended for the monkey chief Sugrīva who is represented by his side, with the face of an ape on a human body.[20]

A relief at Sahet-Mahet also represents the fighting apes in all probability.[21]

A mutilated terracotta in the Patna Museum depicts Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with monkeys, in search of Sītā (Fig. 83). The human figure wearing a crown is Vibhiśaṇa whereas the monkey with a crown is Hanumān.

There are a few other fragmentary reliefs illustrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes. A scene depicting Rāvaṇa threatening Sītā shows a huge male figure aggressively threatening a small female figure by his side. She seems to be turning away from the giant. The episode took place in the Aśoka grove of Rāvaṇa's palace.[22] The same theme is depicted on the panel No. 102 on the north wall of the stone temple at Nalanda. There are only a male and a female figure on the scene. The male figure has three heads, each head having its hair tied up in a knot. The six-handed giant holds in his right hands the bow, the sword and some indistinct object, and in his left hands the pestle, the arrow, while the third one is placed in front of his chest. He is shown to be advancing towards a female figure seated on the left corner turning her face away from him. Frightened by the advancing demon, she has placed one of her hands in front of her breast and the other is placed on the ground supporting the weight of her whole body.[23]

The last relief represents Hanumān bringing the mountain on which grows the life-giving drug for Lakṣmaṇa who had fainted due to many injuries on his body.[24]

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There is an interesting representation of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā in the collection of the Provincial Museum, Lucknow.[25] There are three main figures on the slab : Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Śītā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are four-handed holding the usual attributes of Viṣṇu. There is a serpent hood around the face of Lakṣmaṇa who is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa. The female figure in the middle is halved and bears a lotus mark on the open palm of her right hand.

Many of the scenes described here are carved on the walls and pillars of some of the mediaeval temples of Gujarat and Rajasthan like Modhera Kiradu etc.

Two images of Rāma are also to be found in the Khajuraho group of temples.[26] On the left, outside the Pārśvanātha temple is an image of Rāma holding the bow and the arrow. Another image at the same place shows Rāma and Sītā in *āliṅgana-mudrā*. The four-handed Rāma holds in his upper two hands the bow and the arrow, with his lower hand he blesses Hanumān seated at his right foot and with the upper left hand he embraces his consort. Sītā embraces Rāma with her right hand and holds a lotus in her left (Fig. 84).

In a niche on the wall of Amba Mata temple at Osian, datable to the 11th century A.D., there is a standing image of Rāma and Sītā. It is completely like the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images. Rāma holds the four emblems of Viṣṇu and with one arm he embraces Sītā. The only identifying mark is the figure of Hanumān standing to the right of Rāma. He has the face of a monkey on a human body (Fig. 85).

It will be interesting here to refer to some of the *dhyānas* of Rāma in brief. Rāma is sometimes described as being honoured by several sages. In the *Rāmārcana Candrikā*, Rāma is described in the palace at Ayodhya. He is seated on the Pushpaka throne, with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa to his left. He is adored by sages and the *grahas*.[27]

The same manuscript prescribes a form of Rāma to be meditated upon by those desirous of *mokṣa*. He is to be invoked as in *vīrāsaṇa* near the river Sarayu. One of his hands should be in the *jñāna-mudrā* and the other should be placed on his thigh. He is to be accompanied by Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa.[28]

According to the *Śilparatna*, Rāma is to be accompanied by Sītā only. Rāma seated in the *vīrāsana* shows the *jñāna-mudrā* with one of his hands and the other rests on his lap. By his side is Sītā with a lotus in her hand.[29]

One other variety of seated Rāma with Sītā is described in the *Bṛhad Stotra*. "I meditate upon Rāma, adorned with the *jaṭāmukuta*, with long hands reaching upto the knees wearing the yellow garment, his eyes look like a newly blossomed lotus and he is seated with his consort Sītā on his left thigh."[30]

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Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the forest are described in the *Padma Purāṇa*. It says : "Rāma proceeded to the other forest after tying his hair in a *jaṭā* with a thread of his *yajñopavīta*, wearing *valkala* garments besmearing his body with ashes, wearing a *rudrākṣamālā* and is followed by Lakṣmaṇa."[31]

Generally Rāma is accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā but the *Paurāṇa Karma* describes him accompanied by his father :"Rāma having broad and tender eyes like lotus is accompanied on the right side by Daśaratha anxiously looking at his son, a little behind him stands Lakṣmana holding an umbrella. In the rear appear Bharata and Śatrughna and in front stands Hanumān soliciting the grace o Rāma."[32]

Rāma in the reclining position is also sometimes worshipped. According to the *Atri Saṁhitā* "Rāma is reclining his head in the lap of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa should be shown to be shampooing his feet."[33]

Like Bāla-Kṛṣṇa, Bāla-Rāma is also described by the *Bṛhad Stotra*. The child is seated on his father's lap, adorned with ornaments. He holds in his tiny hands the bow and the arrow.

An attempt has also been made to synthesize the form of Rāma with that of Śiva when the Rāma cult had gained in importance. *Nāradīya Mahāpurāṇa* refers to Rāma identifir with Śiva and there is Umā also with him. He holds all the Śaivite *āyudhas*.[34]

Most of the *dhyānas* referred to above are much later in date but they are cited just to bring to the fore the number of varieties of Rāma images that evolved in that period. The *Rāmāyaṇa* seems to have become popular in the Gupta period as we find it sometimes illustrated in stone on the walls of the early temples. It is surprising that very few *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes have come to light from the western India till the mediaeval period, and even those that are found are negligible.[35] The *Rāmāyaṇa* had a deep impact and it spread even outside India, in Thailand and Cambodia. But still the Rāma worship, forming its own separate and distinctive cult, does not seem to have existed before the mediaeval period, because as far as is known to us, the sculptural evidence to prove its existence is not abundant. The incarnation of Rāma definitely remains a minor one till the late mediaeval period, and a very strong prevalence of the Rāma cult is only a relatively later growth.

Notes

1. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI, 3, 1, 12, 6.
   Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad, III, 8, 2.
2. Winternitz, M., *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. III, Delhi, 1963, p. 515.

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3. Macdonell, A.A., *History of Sanskrit Literature*, London, 1928, p. 306.
4. Winternitz has proved, following Jacobi, that Books I and VII of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are interpolated. See *op. cit.*, p. 495.
5. Winternitz, M , *op. cit.*, p. 497.
6. Bulcke, C., *Rāma-kathā* (in Hindi), Prayag, 1962, pp. 129-37.
7. रामो दाशरथिः कार्यो राजलक्षणलक्षितः
   भरतो लक्ष्मणश्चैव शत्रुघ्नश्च महायशाः ।
   तथैव सर्वे कर्तव्याः किन्तु मौलिविवर्जिताः ॥

   Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 62-63.
8. रामश्चापी शरी खड्गी शंखी वा द्विभुजः स्मृतः ।

   Agni Purāṇa, 49, 6.
9. *Rāmāyaṇa*. I, 49.
10. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XV b.
11. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 109.
12. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XVI a.
13. *Rāmāyaṇa*, III, 16-17.
14. Dixit, K.N., Exploration in Bengal, *ASIAR*, 1926-27, Pl XXXIV a.
15. Vogel, J. Ph., Excavations at Sahet Mahet, *ASIAR*, 1907-08, p. 96.
16. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XVI b.
17. *Rāmāyaṇa*, III, 47.
18. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, p. 17.
19. *Rāmāyaṇa*, IV, 12.
20. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XVII b.
21. Vogel, J. Ph., *op. cit.*, p. 96.
22. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XVII d.
23. Agrawal, V.S. and Krishna Deva, *op. cit*, p. 202.
24. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XVII e.
25. Dayal, Prayag, Important Sculptures Added to the Provincial Museum, Lucknow, *JUPHS*, Vol. VII, Part I, 1934, p. 73, Pl. V.
26. Agrawal, Urmila, *Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance*, p. 39.
27. *Rāmārcana Candrikā*, Manuscript, Oriental Institute, Baroda, No. 85, 10a.
28. *Rāmārcana Candrikā*, Manuscript, Oriental Institute, Baroda, folio 7.
29. कालाम्भोधरकान्तिकान्तमनिशं वीरासनाध्यासितम्
   मुद्रां ज्ञानमयीं दधानमपरं हस्ताम्बुजं जानुनि ।
   सीतां पार्श्वगतां सरोरूहकरां विद्युन्निभां राघवम्
   पश्यन्तं मुकुटांगदादिविविधाकल्पोज्जवलांगं भजे ॥

   Śilparatna, Uttarabhāga, adh. 23, 29.
30. *Bṛhad Stotra, Rāma Rakṣā Stotra*, 89-90, p. 394.
31. अथोपवने दिनमेकं स्थित्वा जटाः कारयित्वा वल्कलं वाससं
   धृत्वैकोपवीती कृतदन्तशुद्धिरेकेनोपवीतेन जटाबद्ध्वा भस्मोद्धलित
   सर्वांगोभासित निष्ठुर कायो मुक्ताफलदामा मणिव्यन्यस्त
   रुद्राक्षमालामुरसि दधतोऽल्पभूषणादिभूषित सीतासहायो
   लक्ष्मणानुचरो विवेश वनान्तरम् ॥

   Padma Purāṇa, Paṭala khaṇḍa, 4, 112, 131.
32. *Paurāṇakarma*, III, p. 71.

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33. विशेषमत्र वक्ष्यामि शयने राघवस्य तु ।
प्राङ्मुख्या चैव सीताया उरौविन्यस्य मस्तकम् ।।
तन्काले लक्ष्मणदेवं पाद (संवाहने रतम्) ।
हसन्मुखं राघवस्य पीडयन्तं पदाम्बुजौ ।।

Atri Saṁhitā (ed. Raghunath and Kavi, Tirupati, 1943), 60, 44-45.

34. रामं त्रिनेत्रं सोमार्धधारिणं शूलिनं वरम् ।
भस्मोद्धूलित सर्वांगं कपर्दिनमुपास्महे ।।
रामाभिरामा सौंदर्यसीमां सौमावतंसिनीम् ।
पाशांकुशधनुर्बाणधरां ध्यायेत्त्रिलोचनाम् ।।

Nāradīya Mahāpurāṇa, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay,1905, *Pūrva khaṇḍa*, 73, 116-117.

35. Agrawal, R.C., Rāmāyaṇa Scenes in Rajasthan Sculptures, *IHQ*, Vol. XXX, March 1954, pp. 154-160.

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KṚṢṆA-BALARĀMA

It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of the beginning of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma worship due to lack of proper historical evidences. The available material also does not lead us beyond a mere conjecture that Kṛṣṇa worship must have been prevalent a couple of centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. It is, however, certain that Kṛṣṇa is a deified hero, like Rāma, round whom several legendary tales were woven.

In the *Rig-veda*, Kṛṣṇa Añgīrasa is mentioned as a renowned seer.[1] The *Kauśitakī Brāhmaṇa* also alludes to one Kṛṣṇa Añgīrasa.[2] Kṛṣṇa as Devakī-putra appears in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*[3] where he is identified as a pupil of Ghora Añgīrasa. From these meagre references, it seems that there was a renowned sage Kṛṣṇa, known in the Vedic period, who was later on deified and identified with Vāsudeva. Another possibility is that Vāsudeva belonged to the Kṛṣṇāyana gotra mentioned by Pāṇinī and was consequently known by the name Kṛṣṇa and later on the legends of cowherd Kṛṣṇa were associated with Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. That Vāsudeva and Kṛṣṇa are synonyms is also corroborated by Patañjali. While commenting on *Pāṇinī Sūtra*, III, 1, 26, he refers to *Kamsa-bhakta* and *Vāsudeva-bhakta*. The terms indicate the servants of Vāsudeva and Kaṁsa in the performance of a sort of drama. At the same time he also mentions the defeated party of Kaṁsa and the victorious party of Vāsudeva. It should be

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noted that the worship of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa explained in the earlier chapter does not involve the Kṛṣṇalīlā episodes in its initial stages. The feats of cowherd Kṛṣṇa are purely a later interpolation[4] and those legends appear only when Kṛṣṇa is turned into an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The religion that developed round the figure of Kṛṣṇa in the later period, necessarily harped upon these feats of the child Kṛṣṇa assigning to them a prime importance.

Though the cult images of Kṛṣṇa make their appearance very late, Kṛṣṇāvatāra itself seems to have been very popular right from the Gupta period, just as it happened in the case of Rāma, but in the case of Kṛṣṇa, only his childhood feats are very popular.

The *Harivaṁśa* gives a detailed account of Kṛṣṇalīlā which is not to be found anywhere in the *Mahābhārata* itself. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the sacred book of the Bhagavatas or Vaiṣṇavas till the present day, follows to a great extent the *Harivaṁśa*. All the childhood stories of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are not chiselled in stone but the sculptors made use of some of the important episodes favoured commonly by the people.

The main story begins with the birth of Kṛṣṇa in the jail. Immediately after his birth, Devakī handed over the child to Vasudeva in order to exchange him with the child of Nanda as already enjoined by Viṣṇu himself. A panel at the famous Dasavatara temple at Deogarh depicts a woman handing over a child to a male figure, evidently to Vasudeva. He is standing to the left of the female figure, Devakī, and taking away from her the new-born babe (Fig. 86). A couple of panels on the same temple also represent Vasudeva fondling the child with whom he has soon to depart. These panels are mutilated and have retained only a child being swung in the hands of a male figure.[5] An 8th century panel at Paharpur in Bengal also shows Vasudeva with Kṛṣṇa in his hands before exchanging him with a child of Nanda.[6]

Crossing the river : A panel datable to the Kushana period, preserved in the Mathura Museum, depicts the episode just after the birth of Kṛṣṇa. The child Kṛṣṇa was carried in a basket to Gokul, crossing the river Jumna. He was protected by a serpent with his hood from the torrential rains. There at Gokul, Vasudeva exchanged his baby boy with the daughter of Yaśodā and quietly returned to Mathura. The river in this panel is indicated by the ripples carved on thc surface and also by a number of aquatic animals like crocodile, tortoise, etc. Near the bank of the river is seen a stout person with a basket on his head, supported by his hands. In front of them is a seven-hooded serpent advancing towards the opposite bank.[7]

Nanda and Yaśodā with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma : This panel on the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh shows Nanda and Yaśodā with the babes in their hands. A few cows are seen beside Yaśodā. Most important feature is the dress of Yaśodā, typical of a

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cowherdess. The dress is still prevalent among the milkmaids of Saurashtra (Fig. 87).

Several exploits are attributed to Kṛṣṇa in his childhood but all of them are not depicted in stone, and hence we come across only the principal and popular events of his life, which are dealt with in order of sequence.

Śakaṭabhañga : Once Yaśodā had gone to the river Jumna leaving the child Kṛṣṇa alone playing under a cart in front of their house. When Kṛṣṇa felt hungry he started crying and throwing his arms up and down, and with one of his legs he hurled down the whole cart.[8]

The lower panel of the gateway discovered at Mandor preserved in the Jodhpur Museum illustrates the scene in a very vivid way. A child is sleeping under a big cart with a toy-bird in his hand, kicking the cart with his left leg. The female figure attending near the child is Yaśodā who has returned after her bath, and sees the cart destroyed by the hungry child who is holding her breast.[9] The pillars are datable to the 5th century A.D. (Figs. 90-91).

The depiction of this event has survived on some of the early panels on temple walls. The famous Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh has a panel on its plinth showing a child reclining on a bed under the cart which is being hurled down with its left foot. The cart has a small floral decorative pattern on its sides and contains a number of pots in it. The female figure, standing in front, is amazed to see the strength of the child (Fig. 88).

The depiction of the Śakaṭabhañga is also noted from Osian and Kiradu.[10] An illustration of the same episode also exists on the outer wall of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. Kṛṣṇa holds the two front supporting bamboos of the cart, and is standing with one leg placed on its wheel so as to break it. The only noticeable feature is the representation of the incident (Fig. 89).

The episode seems to have been quite popular especially in the early period.

Pūtanā-vadha : Kaṁsa had employed a demoness of his court named Pūtanā for the destruction of the child Kṛṣṇa. She took the form of a damsel and came to Nanda's house at midnight. She had gone there to suckle the child with venomous paste applied to her breasts. But instead of being poisoned by her, Kṛṣṇa sucked out her soul through her breasts.[11]

The incident is not found on the early panels showing the *Kṛṣṇalīlā* scenes. On the outer wall of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho, Kṛṣṇa lying on the lap of Pūtanā has sucked out her life and consequently she is turned into a skeleton, with her eyes bulging out, her mouth wide open, and her bones and veins exposed. The

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upraised hands of Pūtanā show her in a state of utter distress while meeting her death.[12]

A panel of the outer wall of Harihara temple I at Osian shows Pūtanā being sucked by the child Kṛṣṇa standing before her.

Stealing of Butter : Kṛṣṇa was very much loved by the people, especially the women folk who rejoiced at his naughty habits of stealing butter. A mutilated panel representing the child Kṛṣṇa, stealing butter from a milk-pot, is preserved in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras (No. 180). This panel, belonging to the early Gupta period, shows a small child with curly hair bending over a pot, trying to hold butter in his hand. Behind in the background can be seen a woman who may be identified as Yaśodā or a *gopī*.

Kṛṣṇa stealing butter is also carved on the panel of the gateway of Mandor. It is much weather-worn, but leaves enough indication to identify the scene. The panel is divided into two parts, on the right side are some cows and on the left can be seen a woman churning the butter milk and a child trying to get some butter from the pot.

An eighth century panel at Paharpur has a child eating a butter-ball held in his hand, which in all probability represents the same scene.[13]

Yamalārjuna-bhañga : Once when Yaśodā was tired of this naughty habit of Kṛṣṇa, she tied him to a grinding stone with a rope. Kṛṣṇa dragged himself to the river bank where stood the trees of Yamala and Arjuna. He tried to pass through them and while doing so the trees were hurled down and uprooted by the force of the big stone tied to Kṛṣṇa.[14] The *Bhāgavata* version mentions that these trees were two *yakṣas*, who had been cursed to go to the earth in the form of trees till Kṛṣṇa would deliver them.[15]

The Buddhist temple at Paharpur contains a panel on the basement wall representing this episode. A small figure, with his hair arranged in a tuft and with *vyāghranakha* around his neck is flanked by trees which are shown to be uprooted by him. Under the roots of the trees are carved the miniature *yakṣas* suggesting their deliverance by Kṛṣṇa as related in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. It is a crude execution of the Yamalārjuna-bhañga episode.

The same incident is also illustrated on a panel on the south face of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. Kṛṣṇa is holding the trunks of two trees and uprooting them. On the top of the trees are seen small heads representing the *yakṣas*.[16]

After this incident the family of Nanda shifted to Vṛndāvana, where Kṛṣṇa defeated and killed two demons named Bakāsura, the swan, and Vatsāsura, the calf.

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These incidents are not related in the *Harivaṁsa*, but the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* does refer to them.[17] The Vatsāsura-vadha is depicted on a mutilated panel of the Mandor pillar.[18]

A panel on the north wall of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho illustrates the same episode. Kṛṣṇa is twisting the muzzle and the tail of the calf with his two hands. The upper two hands are simply raised up. Just to show the ease with which he overpowered the demon, Kṛṣṇa is shown to be standing in the dancing position.[19]

Kāliya Mardana : One of the most favourite exploits of Kṛṣṇa is his subjugation of the serpent Kāliya. There stayed in the waters of Jumna a serpent named Kāliya, who had poisoned the waters of the Jumna. Once Kṛṣṇa thought of destroying it for the sake of the people. So he jumped from a Kadamba tree into the river and subjugated him.[20]

The earliest representation of the scene is on the Mandor pillar. Kṛṣṇa is trampling upon the tail of the serpent with his right foot and his head with the left foot. In his uplifted right hand he holds the flower and in his lef thand he holds the rein with which he had threaded the serpent.[21]

Krishna Deva refers to a fragmentary Gupta relief from Mathura representing Kṛṣṇa riding on the serpent holding the reins in his hand.[22] A terracotta plaque from Mathura. representing the same scene, is preserved in the collection of the Baroda Museum.[23] A 6th century relief from Bhuvanesvara, showing river, the Kadamba tree and Kṛṣṇa trampling upon Kāliya is also published by Goetz.[24]

A stylized representation of the episode is executed on a niche of Harihara Temple I at Osian. On the left side are depicted a tree, evidently the Kadamba, and a child trying to climb it. It represents the earlier part of the story when Kṛṣṇa climbed the Kadamba tree and jumped into the river. To its right is seen Kṛṣṇa attacking the Kāliya who is in half-human and half-serpent form. His head is surmounted by serpent hood. His tail is wound round Kṛṣṇa's waist. Kṛṣṇa seizes his hand with one hand and the other is raised up to attack him. His left leg is folded as if to trample the serpent. Kṛṣṇa is shown as a child with curly hair and he is wearing short tunic (Fig. 92).

A panel on the west face of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho represents a four-armed Kṛṣṇa trampling upon the tail of the serpent with his right foot. He carries a lotus stalk in his two lower hands. The end of the lotus stalk held in his left hand is inserted into the mouth of Kāliya to indicate the threading of his mouth. The upper right hand of Kṛṣṇa is held over his head in a dancing position and the

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lower one holds the disc. Kāliya is represented in human form with a beard and a canopy of serpent hood. His hands are folded in the *añjali-mudrā*.[25]

Kṛṣṇa Kāliyamardana becomes more popular in the mediaeval period. The motiff is adopted for ceiling decoration in the mediaeval temples especially in western India. It could very well be substituted for the earlier lotus motiffs because its execution provides a nice circular pattern, with the intertwined tails of the *nāgas* and *nāgīs* and the principal two figures in the centre.

A beautiful illustration of the Kāliyamardana scene is found on the ceiling of the shrine of a 10th century temple at Asodar in Gujarat. Kṛṣṇa is seen dancing on the hood of a serpent who is represented in human form with folded hands. In the uplifted right hand Kṛṣṇa holds a flute and the left one is placed on his chest. On the either side of them are three *nāgīs*, carved in a half-human form, in the *añjali-mudrā*. Their tails are entwined with the coils of Kāliya forming a big circle around them.

An 11th century panel of the Kāliyamardana executed in similar way is on the ceiling of the Vimala Vasahi temple at Abu. Kṛṣṇa and Kāliya in the centre are flanked by seven *nāga* queens.[26] This scene on the Jaina temple is noteworthy as it indicated the adoption of Hindu mythology, though the Jaina version of the legend differs slightly from that of the *Bhāgavata*.[27]

Similar images have also come to light from different parts of Gujarat. One from the Jami Masjit at Mangrol is published by Cousens.[28] It is very stylistically represented in a temple at Manod, a village near Sunak. A four-handed Kṛṣṇa holds the usual emblems of Viṣṇu and he has placed his right leg on the shoulder of the serpent, depicted as usual in human form with the *añjali-mudrā*. The entwined tails of the serpent and his two queens form an intricately carved circular pattern. Cousens has wrongly identified the panel as Viṣṇu seated on Śeṣa.[29] A couple of other such images are also noted from the temple at Manhud and a Kṛṣṇa temple at Madhavpur.[30]

Govardhana-dhāraṇa : The next important episode that has acquired the utmost popularity is the Govardhana-dhāraṇa. The story of Govardhana-līlā, when Kṛṣṇa rescued the people from the heavy rains by lifting up the mountain to shelter them, is too well-known to be related.[31]

A much-mutilated panel of the Kushana period in the collection of Bharat Kala Bhavan (No. 22092), in all probability, illustrates this episode. Only the head of the main figure has survived and above the head is what looks like a clear representa-

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tion of a mountain. If the identification is correct, it is one of the earliest representations of Kṛṣṇa-līlā scenes, so far known to us.

A complete and detailed execution of the scene is found on the panel of a door-jamb from Mandor datable to the 5th century A.D. The sculptor has followed in many details the description given in the *Harivaṁśa*. The panel itself is divided into three parts, the uppermost representing the seven-peaked mountain. On the right side of a mountain peak is seen a lion and on its left a lioness, and below them are two serpents—all upset because of the uprooting of the mountain. The major portion of the middle part of the panel is covered by a big figure evidently Kṛṣṇa supporting the mountain by his upraised left hand. To his left are seen the small figures of cowherds and cowherdesses. The one uppermost, trying to support the mountain, may be Balarāma. The lower part of the panel shows cows and other animals whom Kṛṣṇa sheltered under his protection. Apart from being an early piece, the panel is interesting as it depicts the incident in its minutest details, quite unlike many other such representations.

An image of Kṛṣṇa supporting the mountain, datable to the 5th century A.D., is preserved in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan. The *vyāghranakha* adorning his neck and the *Kākapakṣa* style of hair clearly identify the figure as Bāla-Kṛṣṇa. On his left hand is supported a mountain, and the other arm is akimbo. The existence of such a huge figure marks the possibility of a big temple whose niche or panel must have been occupied by this image (Fig. 94).

Another such image belonging to the same period from Mathura has been published by Coomaraswamy. The right arm of the figure is akimbo and the upraised left one supports the mountain. The *Kākapakṣa* style of hair and the *vanamālā* adorn the figure. Flanking him in small panels can be seen at the bottom two cowherds and above them some animals.

A similar figure from Kara, belonging to the 5th century A.D., is preserved in the collection of the Allahabad Museum (No. 259).

A Gupta terracotta of Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī, found at Rangmahal, now in the Bikaner Museum, is published by Goetz. The image is of crude workmanship. Its only importance lies in its indication that this theme had prenetrated deeply into the life of the masses, whose art it represents.[32] In the mediaeval period also this theme continued to attract the attention of the artists. A panel on the south-eastern wall of the Paharpur temple bears the illustration of this scene. Peculiarly enough, the figure of Kṛṣṇa is four-handed, with two hands supporting the mountain and the other two placed on two small figures. Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī, for the first time, is depicted with four hands, in this 8th century panel.[33]

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A panel belonging to the 10th century, showing a big cow suckling a calf, is preserved in the Patna Museum (No. 5842). To the left of the cow is a disproportionately small figure of Kṛṣṇa lifting up the mountain. A similar image is also preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (No. 33, 65, 5). A similar image found at Jatipara is also exhibited in the Indian Museum. The child Kṛṣṇa is lifting up the mountain with his left arm and under the mountain is a cow suckling the calf.[34]

A fairly good number of Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī images bear testimony to the popularity of the theme as early as the Gupta period, especially in the adjoining regions of Mathura where he enacted these exploits. The role of Kṛṣṇa as a protector, very befitting the concept of a beneficent god, must have led to its wide and lasting popularity. It may be noted here, that the image of Śrīnāthajī, worshipped by the later Vaiṣṇavas till the present day, is a form of Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī, as is clearly indicated by its upraised left hand.

The images of Kṛṣṇa himself in this form are simple in execution, with one of the hands, mostly the left one, lifting the mountain. There are always some indications to depict him as a child. The representation of the adjoining figures of cowherds and animals is not compulsory, its composition is left to the imagination of individual sculptors.

The great popularity of the Kṛṣṇa Govardhanalīlā, in Rajasthan is also amply evidenced by a number of panels illustrating this episode on the walls of mediaeval temples. R.C. Agrawal refers to those from the Osian and Somesvara temples at Kiradu.[35] A beautiful description of this incident is given in the inscription of Rupaden at Jodhpur dated 13th century A.D.[36] Its great impact on the religious life of the people is also obvious from a number of memorial pillars of the mediaeval period, bearing the illustration of this scene, still existent in Rajasthan.

Thus, of all the episodes concerning the exploits of Kṛṣṇa, Govardhanadhāraṇa is especially favoured by the people throughout the centuries. In the earlier period it acquired great importance in Uttar Pradesh and in the later period in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Keśīvadha : An important feat of Kṛṣṇa after this is the destruction of the demon Keśī who attempted to kill Kṛṣṇa in the form of a horse. He stayed in the forest near Vṛndāvana and once when Kṛṣṇa went there with his friends Keśī rushed to attack him on his chest with his two front legs. But Kṛṣṇa inserted his hand into the horse's mouth and killed him.[37]

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A panel on the gateway of Mandor illustrates Kṛṣṇa as Keśīhantā. A small figure of Kṛṣṇa is hitting the mouth of the horse demon who is standing on his hind legs, with his left arm. The right hand is also raised up as if to hit him.[38]

A very mutilated piece, supposedly of Kṛṣṇa Keśīhantā, from Valabhi in Saurashtra has been published by Dr. U.P. Shah. A headless figure is seen standing firmly with his mutilated right hand upraised, probably to hit the demon. To his left is an animal, evidently the horse, supporting himself on his hind legs, the front two being raised to hit Kṛṣṇa. As the head of the animal is also missing, we cannot know whether the arm of Kṛṣṇa was inserted in his mouth. The sculpture belongs to the 6th century A.D.[39]

A specimen of Kṛṣṇa killing Keśī has come to light from the Buddhist temple at Paharpur.[40] The forest is indicated by a couple of trees in the background. The figure of the child Kṛṣṇa, adorned with *vyāghranakha* and *Kākapakṣa* style of hair, is seen with his right hand upraised to hit the demon who is standing on his hind legs to the left of Kṛṣṇa. The left elbow of Kṛṣṇa is inserted into the mouth of the horse. The figure below the feet of Kṛṣṇa shows the latter part of the story when the defeated demon was breathing his last and is being trampled upon by Kṛṣṇa. This 7th century panel is a vivid illustration of the episode.

A similar image datable to the same period is preserved in the collection of the Amber Museum (Fig. 93). This incident of Kṛṣṇa's life also seems to be fairly popular.

After this episode Kṛṣṇa proceeds to Mathura to kill Kaṁsa and to fulfil one of his life's missions. On his way to Mathura also Kṛṣṇa is shown in action in a few noteworthy occasions.

Kubjoddhāra : When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were on their way to Kaṁsa an ugly woman very devotedly offered a fragrant paste to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa seeing her devotion took pity on her and turned her into a beautiful lady.[41]

The incident is illustrated on a west face panel of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho. It shows Kṛṣṇa accepting the present of the scented paste from an ugly-looking woman standing to his left. Balarāma, standing to the right of Kṛṣṇa, is canopied by a serpent hood and has his right hand in the *abhaya-mudrā* and his left hand holds the plough (Fig. 96).

Destruction of Kuvalayāpīḍa: In front of the court of Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa destroyed the elephant who tried to attack him.[42] The south face of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho depicts Kṛṣṇa in the *tribhañga* posture, trampling with his left foot the elephant on his back and with his lower hand he is seizing his trunk. The upper

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right hand is raised with the *gadā* and the upper left is not clear. The elephant is seen in extreme agony.[43]

In the court of Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa killed three wrestlers, Śala, Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika. Śala-vadha is represented in the west face of the same Laksmana temple at Khajuraho, Kṛṣṇa has raised the *gadā* in his right hand to strike Śala on his head, and with his other hand he has caught the wrestler by his waist. The wrestler also defends himself with a *gadā*.[44]

At the court of Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were asked to wrestle with the well-known wrestlers of the court. In no time Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma killed both of them.[45]

The wrestling scene is depicted on an 8th century panel at Paharpur where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, identifiable from their typical hair style and short tunics, are shown engaged in a duel with two other persons. On the right side of the panel one of them clasps the wrestler tightly by his hand and to the left of the panel the defeated recumbent wrestler is seized by his neck and his leg.[46]

The episode is also illustrated on the south face of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho.[47]

Ultimately comes the turn of Kaṁsa, whom Kṛṣṇa seizes by his hair and kills him.[48] The only probable representation of Kaṁsa-vadha is on a very mutilated panel at the Dasavatara temple of Deogarh. Only the hand holding a human head by its hair is preserved.[49]

The childhood feats of Kṛṣṇa are over with the death of Kaṁsa. His later life is generally not depicted in stone. A 5th century panel from Garhwa, preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum, represents Kṛṣṇa witnessing the fight between Bhīma and Jarāsangha. Kṛṣṇa is shown holding the four usual emblems of Viṣṇu. To his right is a mutilated figure of Arjuna with a bow and arrow in his hands. To the left of Kṛṣṇa are Bhīma and Jarāsangha engaged in a fight. Bhīma has grasped with his hand the neck of Jarāsangha and his left leg is thrown round his waist. The slab might have provided a panel in any temple (Fig. 95).

Strangely enough the exploits of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* are generally not found before the late mediaeval period. The terracotta panel from Rangmahal published by Goetz probably illustrates the Dāṇalīlā.[50] The sculptures on a panel at the Paharpur temple can be identified as Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā, but not Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.[51]

The survey in the foregoing pages would show that the images of Kṛṣṇa till the mediaeval period are more illustrative reliefs than static cult images. Excepting the

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evolution in the stylistic features, there are no iconographic emblems particularly attributed to Kṛṣṇa. The tendency is always to show him as a child with the *vyāghranakha*, still in use for children in India, and the *Kākapakṣa* style of hair, falling down on the shoulders in the shape of crow's feathers. Though he is recognized as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, very rarely do we see him having four hands. He is depicted as the most human of all the incarnations.

Several incidents of the life-story of Kṛṣṇa are variously portrayed on the panels of the Dasavatara temple, in the 7th century temple at Sirpur, on the 8th century panels of the Paharpur temple and in the 10th century panels of the Paharpur temple and in the 10th century Laksmana temple at Khajuraho. In the first three examples there is hardly any attempt to show Kṛṣṇa in a different age group, whereas in the Laksmana temple Kṛṣṇa is shown as an infant in his feats of very early age, and in later incidents he is more matured and advancing towards his teens and hence he wears the *mukuṭa* and other ornaments also.

Apart from these, the texts on religion and iconography also describe Kṛṣṇa in his various other aspects. Kṛṣṇa is described as accompanied by his wives Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā, in the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*[52] and the *Vaikhānasāgama.*[53] The *Vaikhānasāgama* describes Kṛṣṇa as Pārthasārathī, riding a chariot with Arjuna. In his left hand he should hold the reins and his right hand should be in the *añjali-mudrā.*[51] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* refers to Kṛṣṇa having four hands, holding the usual four emblems of Viṣṇu and adorned with ornaments.[55] As in sculpture the dalliance of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* hardly forms the subject of the early texts on iconography. The *Padma Purāṇa* gives a brief description of Kṛṣṇa and a *gopī* under a Kadamba tree. Kṛṣṇa has placed one of his hands on her shoulder.[56] The *Śilparatna* also describes him surrounded by *gopas* and *gopīs.*[57] Such images are known only from the late mediaeval period. One such image of Kṛṣṇa Veṇugopāla flanked by several *gopas* and *gopīs* has been found at Jogishahi.[58] The image is two-handed playing upon the flute. There is a group of *gopīs* to his right and other *gopas* to the left. Below on the panel are also some animals and other figures worshipping him. An eight-handed image of Veṇugopāla has come to light from Kathial in north Punjab, belonging to about the 12th century.

The eight-handed variety of Kṛṣṇa image, described in the *Harivaṁśa,* holds the sword, the disc, the mace, the arrow, the *carma* (hide), (the *sārañga*), the bow and the conch.[59] A Kṛṣṇa image in the *Yoga-mudrā* is referred to in the *Śilparatna.* He is in a gorgeously decorated *Maṇḍapa* in the city of Dvārāvatī, holding the disc, the conch, the lotus, and the mace, with a pair of hands holding the flute and the other two are in the *Yoga-mudrā.*[60]

The cult that centred round the worship of Śrīnāthajī or Bālagopāla etc. was of a much later origin, mostly patronised by Vallabhites in Western India. The

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Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship was mainly influenced by Kavi Jayadeva and later on by Chaitanya. These two great exponents of Vaisnavism—Vallabha and Chaitanya—contribute very much to enhance the influence of Kṛṣṇa worship in India in various forms.

Balarāma : The Vīra worship of Vāsudeva and Saṁkarṣaṇa was transformed into the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as incarnations of Viṣṇu. Balarāma does not acquire a prominent place among the *avatāras,* nevertheless he is an important member of the *Catur Vyūha.*

The worship of Balarāma has been greatly influenced by *Nāga* worship. In fact he is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa himself in the *Mahābhārata.* In him we see the blending of the Lord of the snakes and the Lord of beings, indicated by a fine incident related in the *Harivaṁśa.* Once when Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Akrūra were going to Mathura in a chariot, Akrūra wished to pay his homage to the Lord of the *nāgas* in the river Jumna. Akrūra dived down into the world of snakes. In the middle of it he saw the Lord of serpents with a thousand hoods. He carried a ploughshare and a pestle. He was adorned with one ear-ring, and intoxicated he slept. He was attended upon by several *nāgas* and *nāgīs.* In his lap was seated Ghanaśyāma or Kṛṣṇa, dark in complexion and wearing yellow garments.[61]

It may be noted in this connection that the early images of Balarāma are exactly similar to the nāga images. The only distinguishing point between them is the presence of the *vanamālā* on the figure of Balarāma.

The image of Balarāma, as described by various texts, invariably holds a ploughshare and a pestle. The *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*[62] says that Baladeva should have a ploughshare in his hand. He should be shown with protruding eyes indicating his inebriety. He should wear one ear-ring and his body should be white like a conch-shell, lily or moon. The *Viṣṇudharmottaram* gives two descriptions of Balarāma—one in his *vyūha* aspect and the other in his *vibhāva* or incarnatory aspect. In his *vyūha* form he should be sculptured as Vāsudeva, having one head and four hands. In his two hands he holds the ploughshare and the pestle instead of the mace and the disc. He should be fair in complexion wearing blue garments.[63] Another description attributes to him only two hands holding the ploughshare and the pestle. His eyes are intoxicated. He is fair in complexion wearing blue garments and is adorned with ear-rings.[64]

According to the *Agni Purāṇa* the image of Balarāma can be either two-handed or four-handed. The two-handed image should hold the mace and the ploughshare, whereas the four-handed variety has the conch and the pestle in his two additional hands.[65] It is surprising that none of these texts mentions the canopy of the serpent-hood which is invariably found with the image of Balarāma.

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Balarāma worship can be traced back to a couple of centuries before the Christian era, justified by the extant images. But it is rather difficult to decide whether these early images represent the *vyūha* or the *vibhāva* aspect.

One of the earliest images of Balarāma found in Mathura is preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum. Balarāma is standing under the canopy of a serpent-hood, holding the ploughshare and the pestle, which rest against his shoulders. His right leg is slightly bent at the knee. The image can safely be dated to the 1st century B.C. (Fig. 98).

An image of Balarāma datable to the 1st century B.C. has also come to light in the Adikesvara Ghat in Benaras and is now preserved in the collection of Bharat Kala Bhavan (No. 279). The mutilated image has preserved only the serpent-hood. There is a small lion face attached to the end of the pestle which probably signifies the banner.

There are a number of Balarāma images preserved in the collection of the Mathura Museum, showing the same iconographic features. Balarāma, standing under the serpent-hood, holds the pestle in his left hand and the right hand is raised up to rest on the snake-hood, sometimes holding the wine flask, indicating his fondness for intoxicating liquor. Sometimes the hand is raised up resting on the hood (Fig. 99).

An interesting image of Balarāma datable to the 5th century has come to light from Indhar and is now preserved in the collection of the Gwalior Museum. Balarāma is standing under the canopy of a five-hooded serpent. In his upper left hand he holds the ploughshare and in the lower left the wine flask. The upper right hand is resting upon the serpent-hood and the lower right is placed on his waist. Generally, Balarāma has two hands but this is an early four-handed image of Balarāma.[66]

The 8th century image from Paharpur is one of the finest specimens of Balarāma's images. He has four hands, the upper right and the left bearing respectively the pestle and the ploughshare, the lower right holds the wine cup and the lower left is akimbo. He is surmounted by the seven-hooded canopy of a snake. To his right is a female attendant holding a wine glass and the wine-pot—so very dear to Balarāma. The male attendant to the left holds a fly whisk.[67]

A similar image is preserved in the collection of the Varendra Research Society at Rajashahi, belonging to about the 11th century.[68] The four-handed images of Balarāma are also known from Nalanda and Kurkihar. The image from Nalanda shows Balarāma canopied by the serpent-hood, holding the ploughshare, the pestle, the sweet ball and the wine flask.[69] The Kurkihar image is similar to the Nalanda bronze but is slightly mutilated.[70]

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A four-handed image has also come to light from Baroda. The image is a fine specimen of the 9th century art.[71]

One interesting image is on a projecting pillar of the temple No. 7 at Osian. It represents Balarāma seated on Garuḍa under the canopy of a five-hooded cobra. He holds in his upper hands the ploughshare and the mace, one of the lower hands holds the conch and the other is held near the chest in the *jñāna-mudrā*. The significance lies mainly in the fact that it represents Balarāma in his *vyūha* aspect, which is clearly indicated by the adjoining figure of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. Besides the representation of Balarāma on Garuḍa is very rare.[72]

Balarāma is sometimes accompanied by Revatī, his consort. The one from Osian is on the outer wall of a subsidiary shrine near Sachia Mata temple. The image, canopied by a five-hooded serpent, holds in the right hands the ploughshare and the wine flask. In his upper left he holds the pestle and with his lower left hand he clasps his consort to his bosom.[73]

A similar image of Balarāma and Revatī is preserved in the Rajputana Museum at Ajmer. He holds his usual emblems in his three hands, the lower left is akimbo instead of embracing Revatī. She is standing by his side holding a lotus and probably a wine flask (Fig. 100). Though the image looks like that of Balarāma and Revatī it is quite possible that it is only a part of the Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and Ekānaṁśā panel. An identical image is also preserved in the same Museum.[74]

Balarāma and Revatī in the *āliṅgana-mudrā* are preserved in a niche of the Parsvanatha temple at Khajuraho (Fig. 101). Balarāma, under the seven serpent-hoods, holds in his upper left hand the plough, the upper right is not seen, the lower left is akimbo and the right embraces Revatī. Revatī holds a lotus in her one hand and the other embraces Balarāma. The image is carved in the *tribhaṅga* posture.[75]

In the mythology of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma has an important role to play as an elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. He supports and helps him in many of his exploits against the demons. One of the exploits of Balarāma is the destruction of Pralambāsura,[76] who came to participate in their sports, and skilfully carried away Balarāma high up in the sky assuming a huge body.

Balarāma, inspired by Kṛṣṇa, miraculously increased his weight and brought him down to earth, sitting on his shoulders. A terracotta plaque of the 6th century preserved in the Allahabad Museum, illustrates the episode. A recumbent demon, evidently Pralamba, is seen being trampled upon by Balarāma who is seated on his shoulders. Kṛṣṇa, standing to their right, is witnessing the feat of Balarāma. Both

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Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have their hair tied up in a knot and their look is very much like little children (Fig. 97).

Another panel illustrating the same episode is still preserved on the temple at Paharpur, referred to by S.K. Saraswati.[77] A huge figure of the demon is carrying away the child Balarāma. To his right is standing Kṛṣṇa with a flute in his hand.

Another demon who was destined to be destroyed by Balarāma was Dhenuka who zealously guarded the forest of the Tāla (palm) in the form of an ass. Once Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the cowherds went there and desired to taste a ripe fruit. Balarāma started shaking down the fruit and consequently the demon Dhenuka rushed to the site to hit Balarāma. He tried to hit Balarāma with his hind legs. Balarāma caught hold of them and hurled him in the air and threw him dead on the palm-tree.[78] On the topmost panel of the famous pillar at Mandor is seen Balarāma standing under a palm-tree, catching hold of a mutilated animal, probably the donkey.[79]

A fanpalm capital with the headless figures of the donkey in front, preserved in the Gwalior Museum, depicts Dhenuka-vadha in the opinion of Dr. Banerjea. Besides the association of the Dhenuka-vadha episode in the palm-grove, the palm is associated with Balarāma, who was very fond of its intoxicating liquor.[80] If the identification be correct, this is one of the earliest documents of a mythological representation of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, dating to the 1st century A.D. A similar representation is also preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum.[81]

The life of Balarāma is tainted with the sin of murdering an ascetic. Once when he went to visit Naimiśāraṇya, all the ascetics there gave him a hearty welcome and paid due respect to him, but Suta Lomaharṣaṇa who occupied the highest position, did not even get up from his seat as a mark of respect. Balarāma, thus insulted, killed him with a blade of Kuśa grass.[82] The incident is probably depicted on the projecting panel at the entrance of the Laksmana temple at Sirpur dated in the 6th century A.D. Suta Lomaharṣaṇa is seen seated on a small pedestal and Balarāma to his right has raised up his ploughshare with both of his hands to kill him.[83] An 8th century panel from Dholpur, preserved in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, is a vivid illustration of the same episode. Lomaharṣaṇa is sitting in *lalitāsana* on a small stool with one of his hands resting on his knee. To his left is Balarāma with his feet wide apart, attacking Lomaharṣaṇa on his neck with his ploughshare held up in both of his hands. To the right of Lomaharṣaṇa is a kneeling female figure, probably his wife mourning his death. An attendant is standing below her.[84]

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A panel on the south wall of the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho also depicts the same scene. Balarāma is here represented under the canopy of a snake-hood. He holds his ploughshare in his upper right hand.[85]

The *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* as well as the *Viṣṇudharmottaram* refer to the images of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma flanking the image of Ekānaṁśā. The *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* says that the goddess Ekānaṁśā should be carved between Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, with her left hand resting on her hip and the right hand holding the lotus. If she is four-handed, she holds in her left hands the book and the lotus and one of her right hands holds the rosary and the other is in the *varada-mudrā*. If she is eight-armed, she holds in her left hand the *kamaṇḍalu*, the bow, the lotus and the book and in her three right hands the arrow, the mirror, the rosary, the fourth one is in the *varada-mudrā*.[86] The *Viṣṇudharmottaram* simply says that the goddess Ekānaṁśā is placed between Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, with her left hand on her waist and her right hand holding a lotus.[87]

Not many images of this kind have come to light. A huge image of Ekānaṁśā flanked by Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa has been found in Gaya, and a part of it is preserved in the Patna Museum. The huge figure, belonging to 3rd century A.D., must have occupied a panel of a temple dedicated to Vāsudeva.

One beautiful piece is also preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum (No. 9.58). The goddess, holding a lotus, is flanked by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, both of them having four hands. Balarāma holds in his right hands the wine flask and the ploughshare, his left hands are broken. There are two small attendant figures below the hands of the goddess. The panel is datable to the 7th century A.D. (Fig. 102).

Balarāma seems to have acquired importance in the early period, but he does not figure as an important incarnation of Viṣṇu. He has always remained subordinate to Kṛṣṇa, as is evident from the scattered images of Balarāma.

Notes

1. *Rig-veda*, VIII, 84, 3-4.
2. *Kauśitakī Brāhmaṇa*, XXX, 9.
3. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III, 17, 6.
4. Bhandarkar, R.G., *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, pp. 49-54.
5. Gupta Temple at Deogarh, *MASI*, 70, Pl. XXX d & f.
6. Saraswati, S.K., *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1962, Pl. XII, fig. 29.
7. Sahani, Daya Ram, "A Stone Sculpture Representing an Incident From the Life of Kṛṣṇa", *ASIAR*, 1925-26, p. 184, Pl. LXVII.
8. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 6, 4-5.
9. Bhandarkar, D.R., "Excavations at Maṇḍor", *ASIAR*, 1905-6, p. 137, and *ASIAR*, 1909-10, Pl. XLIV b.

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10. Agrawal, R.C., "*Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Rājasthān Sculptures and Eigraphs*", *IHQ*, Vol. XXX, pp. 350-52.
11. Krishna Deva, "Kṛṣṇalīlā Scenes in the Laksmana Temple at Khajuraho", *Lalit Kalā*, No. 7, Pl. XXXIV, fig. 11.
12. Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 137, fig. 1.
13. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 7, 17-19.
14. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 7, 17-19.
15. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 10.
16. Krishna Deva, *op. cit.* Pl. XXXIV, fig. 11.
17. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 11.
18. Marshall and Sahani, "Excavations at Maṇḍor", *ASIAR*, 1909-10, Pl. XLIV b.
19. Krishna Deva, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXVII, fig. 5.
20. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 11-12.
21. *ASIAR*, 1909-10, Pl. XLIV.
22. Krishna Deva, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
23. Goetz, Hermann, Earliest Representation of the Myth Cycle of Kṛṣṇa Govinda, *JOI*, Vol. I, No. I, Pl. i, fig. 1.
24. Goetz, Hermann, *op. cit.*, Pl. 1, fig. 2.
25. Krishna Deva, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXII, 4.
26. Muni Jayantavijayaji (Tr. Shah, U.P.), *Holy Abu*, Bhavnagar, 1954, Pl. 16.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
28. Cousens. *Somnath and Other Mediaeval Temples at Kathiawad*, Pl. LXXXVIII.
29. Burgess and Cousens, *Architectural Antiquities of North Gujarat*, p. 109, fig. 10.
30. Dave, K.B., *Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān*, p. 211.
31. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 17, 18.
32. Goetz, Hermann, *The Art & Architecure of Bikaner State*, Pl. 5.
33. *ASIAR*, 1926-27, p. 143.
34. *ASIAR*, 1921-22, Pl. XXXVI e.
35. Agrawal, R.C., *op. cit.*, pp. 346, 350.
36 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. IV, p. 313.
37. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 24, 32-37; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 37.
38. *ASIAR*, 1909-10, Pl. XLIV, 6.
39. Shah, U.P., *Sculptures from Samlaji and Roda*, pp. 24-25, fig. 12.
40. Saraswati, S.K., *Early Scu'pture of Bengal*, Pl. VI, fig. 16, pp. 65-67.
41. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 42.
42. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 29; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 43.
43. Krishna Deva, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXI, fig. 3.
44. *Ibid.*, Pl. XXXII, fig. 7.
45. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 44.
46. Saraswati, S.K., *op. cit.* (Early Sculpture of Bengal), Pl. V, fig. 15.
47. Krishna Deva, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXI, fig. 2.
48. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 30 ; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 45.
49. Vats, M.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XXI c.
50. Goetz, Hermann, *op. cit.*, Pl. 6.
51. Saraswati, S.K., *op. cit* , Pl. III, fig. 10.
52. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 74-75.
53. *Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala*, 60, p. 203.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
55. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 70, 2-5.
56. *Padma Purāṇa, Pātāla khaṇḍa*, 28, 2-4.
57. *Śilparatna, Uttarabhāga*, 23, 38, p. 131.
85. Das, G.S., "A Unique Image", *Indian Culture*, Vol. VI, No. 4, April 1940, Pl. opp. p. 408.

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59. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 122, 4-5.
60. *Śilparatna, Uttarabhāga*, 23, 38, p. 131.
61. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 26, 48-58.
62. *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, LVI, 36.
63. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 57, 36.
64. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 85, 73.
If the correct reading is चैक कुण्डली instead of चैव कुण्डली the description tallies more with the one given in *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*. Even in the *Mahābhārata*, the emblem of Balarāma is *hala* and मुसल. Cf. *Mahābhārata*, III, 119, 10-240; V, 3, 44; XIII, 147, 630.
65. *Agni Purāṇa*, 49, 6-7.
66. Annual Administrative Report of the Department of Archaeology, Gwalior State, for the Year 1929, Pl. IV d.
67. Saraswati, S.K., *op. cit.*, Pl. III, fig. 10.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
69. Banerji, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, Pl. I, 6.
70. *JISOA*, Vol. II, Pl. XXVIII, 1.
71. Annual Administrative Report of the Department of Archaeology, Gwalior State, for the Year 1933-34, p. 104.
72. Bhandarkar, Temples of Osian, *ASIAR*, 1908-09, p. 106.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
74. Dave, K.B., *op.cit.*, p. 220.
75. Avasthi, Ramasraya, *Tripathagā*, Vol. XII, No. 1, p. 50.
76. *Harivaṁśa*, II, 14, p. 41.
77. Saraswati, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 83, fig. 30.
78. *Harivaṁśa*, II, IB. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* attributed it to Kṛṣṇa.
79. Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 138, fig. 2.
80. Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 423.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
82. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X, 78.
83. *ASIAR*, 1909-10, Pl. II.
84. Krishna Deva, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXI, fig. 1.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
86. *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, LVIII, 37-39.
87. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 85.

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BUDDHA

Buddha was added to the list of the incarnations of Viṣṇu only after the Gupta period and is not found sculptured except on the Daśāvatāra panels. Though several *Purāṇas*[1] refer to Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, very little importance is attached to him.

The image of Buddha does not carry any of the Vaiṣṇava emblems according to the injunction of *Agni Purāṇa*. He has a very benign and calm appearance, long ears and a halo behind him. He is seated on a high lotus pedestal and his hands are in the *abhaya* and the *varada-mudrā*.[2] The term *urdhva padma* is significant as the images of Yoga Nārāyaṇa are sometimes shown to be seated on a high lotus with a long lotus stalk beneath, a characteristic which is very peculiar of some Buddhist images. It may merely be conjectured that the sculptor might have tried to represent Buddha incarnation through the image of Yoga Nārāyaṇa.

Notes

1. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 47, 247; *Agni Purāṇa*, 16; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, 1, 3, 24, etc.
2. *Agni Purāṇa*, 49, 8.

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KALKI

Kalki is a future incarnation who is still to appear at the end of the Kali Age.[1] According to the prediction of the *Agni Purāṇa*, he will be holding the sword, the conch and the disc and the mace.[2] The Kalki incarnation is generally found in the Daśāvatāra panels, seated on the horse holding a sword.

Notes

1. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, I, 3, 26.
2. *Agni Purāṇa*, 49, 9.

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HAYAGRĪVA

Hayagrīva, though a very minor incarnation of Viṣṇu, has a very ancient origin. In the *Mahābhārata*, Hayaśīras is specifically used for Viṣṇu[1] and Kṛṣṇa.[2] Viṣṇu is supposed to have rescued the Vedas stolen by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.[3] He is also known as Hayamukha.

In the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*[4] Hayagrīva is a form of Saṁkarṣaṇa. He should be shown wearing a blue garment and should have a smiling face. His feet should be placed in the hands of the image of earth. He has eight hands. In four of his hands he holds a conch, a wheel, a mace and a lotus. The rest of the hands should be placed on the four personified Vedas.

Not many images of Hayagrīva are found. Three mediaeval images have been preserved in the Kotah Museum. One is a four-handed standing image with the face of a horse. The lower right hand is in the *varada-mudrā*, the upper right holds the mace, the upper left holds the book and the lower left holds *kamaṇḍalu*. Another image is also similar to this.[5]

Laksmana Temple at Khajuraho also has an image of Hayagrīva on a niche of the *pradkṣiṇā-patha*, flanked by the *āyudha-puruṣas*. Out of the four hands only the

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right two have survived, one in the *varada-mudrā* and the other holding the mace (Fig. 103).

It seems that the Hayagrīva worship was acknowledged only by a narrow group of people. His worship must have been prevalent in Rajasthan, for Rajasthan has produced his images, as far as the present discoveries go.

Notes

1. *Mahābhārata*, V, 97, 5.
2. *Ibid.*, XII, 330, 36.
3. *Ibid.*, XII, 335, 22-72.
4. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 7.
5. Agrawal, R.C., Three Unique and Unpublished Sculptures of Hayagrīva from Rajasthan, *JOI*, Vol. XI, No. 3, pp. 281-282.

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NARA-NĀRĀYAṆA

It has already been stated before the worship of Nara-Nārāyaṇa must have been prevalent in and before the Gupta period. The *Mahābhārata* glorifies Nara-Nārāyaṇa to a very great extent and also mentions the location of their *āśrama* at Badarī. They are supposed to have taken the birth in order to help the needy. Nara-Nārāyaṇa are always worshipped together and later on they are identified with Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna.

The only reference to the iconography of Nara-Nārāyaṇa is found in the *Viṣṇudharmoṭṭaram*.[1] *Viṣṇudharmottaram* also identifies Nara-Nārāyaṇa with Hari-Kṛṣṇa. "The colour of Nara is greenish like the *dūrvā* grass. He has two hands while Nārāyaṇa has four hands. Nārāyaṇa is coloured like the petal of a blue lotus. Between those two should be made Badari bearing fruit. Under the Badari in a charming vehicle having eight wheels drawn by the elements (*bhūta*) should be made standing the two—Nara and Nārāyaṇa. Both of them carry rosaries, wear antelope skins and have matted locks of hair. With one of the feet in the chariot and the other behind it, Hari should be made like Nara or Narendra while Kṛṣṇa should be made like Nārāyaṇa."[1]

The only known image of Nara-Nārāyaṇa has survived on the wall of the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh. They are seated on two pedestals, Nara having only

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two hands is on the left and Nārāyaṇa having four hands is to the right. They are shown to be sitting under a tree. Nara has his right hand in the *varada-mudrā* and the left hand in the *abhaya-mudrā*. Nārāyaṇa holds the rosary and the lotus in his two upper hands and the *kamaṇḍalu* in his lower left hand. His lower right hand is in the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*. There are flying *gāndharvas* in between the trees and Brahmā on the top. Lion and antelopes are seen below their pedestals (Fig. 104).

The original image in the shrine of Badarinātha was probably that of Nārāyaṇa with two hands in the *dhyāna-mudrā*. Nothing definite can be said about it because the available photograph is not clear.

A terracotta image of Nara-Nārāyaṇa from Ahicchatra, belonging to the Gupta period, has been housed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.[2]

Nara-Nārāyaṇa seem to have passed into oblivion after the Gupta period.

Notes

1. *Viṣṇudharmottaram*, III, 76.
2. P. Pal, Notes on Two Sculptures of the Gupta Period, *Archives of Asian Art*, XXIV, 1970-71, pp. 78-79, fig. 3.

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	Abbreviations
Artibus Asiae	
Archaeological Survey of India	(ASIAR)
Annual Administrative Report of the Archaeological Department, Gwalior State	
Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India	(PWM)
Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute	
Epigraphica Indica	(Ep. Ind.)
Indian Art and Letters	
Indian Historical Quarterly	(IHQ)
Indian Antiquary	
Indian Culture	
Journal of Gujarat Research Society	(JGRS)
Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art	(JISOA)
Journal of the University of Bombay	
Journal of the Oriental Institute	(JOI)
Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society	(JBORS)
Journal of Indian History	
Journal of the U.P. Historical Society	(JUPHS)
Lalit Kala	
Marg	
Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India	(MASI)
Proceedings of the Indian History Congress	
Tripathaga	

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APPENDIX

CATURVIṂŚATIMŪRTIS OF VIṢṆU (The Order of Emblems)

Name	*Padma Purāṇa*, IV, 79	*Rūpa-maṇḍana*, adh. V	*Pārameśvara Saṁhitā, Kriyākhaṇḍa*, 23, 72-78	*Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā*, 26, 33-46
1. Keśava	SCGP	PSCG	PSCG	PSCG
2. Nārāyaṇa	PGCS	SPGC	SCGP	SPGC
3. Mādhava	CSPG	GCSP	PGSC	PGSC
4. Govinda	GPSC	CGPS	CGSP	CGSP
5. Viṣṇu	SCPG	GPSC	GPSC	GPSC
6. Madhusūdana	SPGC	CSPG	CSPG	CSPG
7. Trivikrama	GCSP	PGCS	CGPS	CGPS
8. Vāmana	CGPS	SCGP	SCGP	SCGP
9. Śrīdhara	CPSG	PCGS	PCGS	PCGS
10. Hṛṣikeśa	CGSP	GCPS	GCSP	GCSP
11. Padmanābha	PSGC	SPCG	GPCS	SPGC
12. Dāmodara	SGCP	PSGC	PSGC	PSGC
13. Saṁkarṣaṇa	SPCG	GSPC		
14. Vāsudeva	CSGP	GSCP		
15. Pradyumna	SCGP	CSGP		
16. Aniruddha	GSPC	CGSP		
17. Puruṣottama	PSGC	CPSG		
18. Adhokṣaja	GSCP	PGSC		
19. Nṛsiṁha	PGSC	CPGS		
20. Acyuta	PCSG	GPCS		
21. Janārdana	—	PCSG		
22. Upendra	—	SGCP		
23. Hari	—	SCPG		
24. Kṛṣṇa	GPCS	SGPC		

Abbreviations : S = *śaṅkha*, P = *padma*, G = *gadā*, C = *cakra*.
The order of emblems starts from the lower right hand in the clockwise direction.

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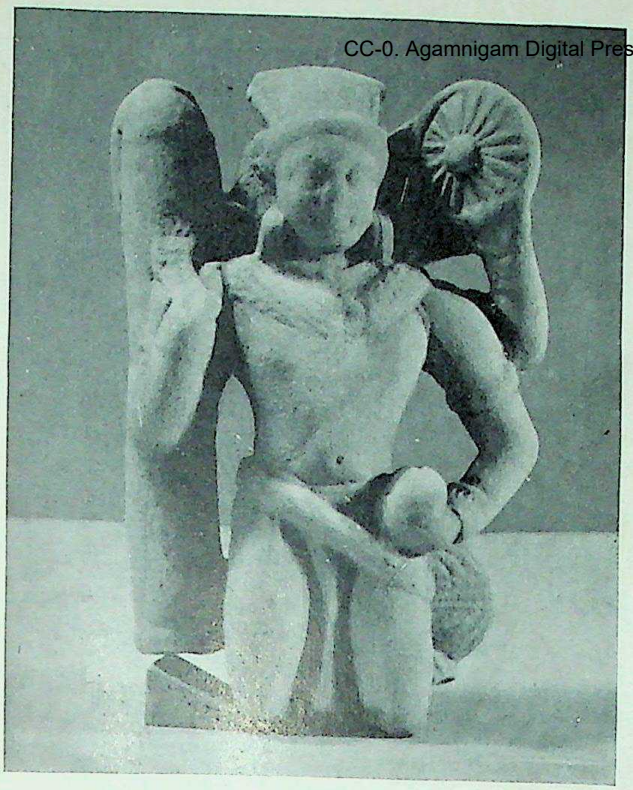

Fig. 1. Viṣṇu, 3rd C. A.D., Mathura Museum

Fig. 2. Back of Fig. 1

Fig. 3. Viṣṇu, 3rd C. A.D., Mathura Museum

Fig. 4. Viṣṇu from Uchandi, 4th C. A.D., Allahabad Museum

Fig. 5. Viṣṇu, 4th C. A.D., Bhinmal

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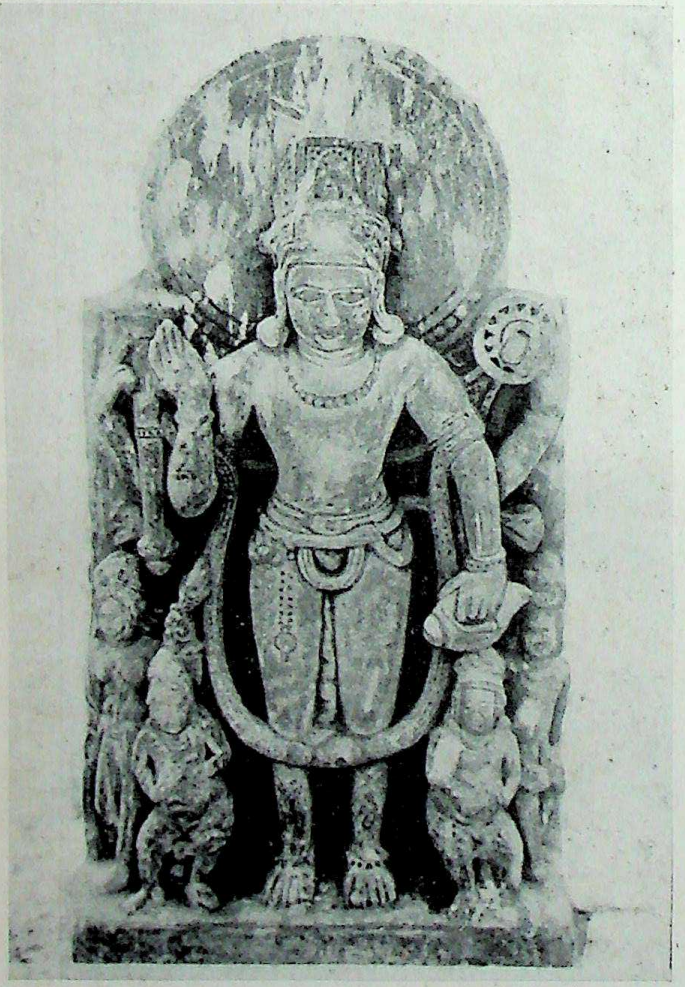

Fig. 6. Trivikrama Viṣṇu, 6th C. A.D., Devangana

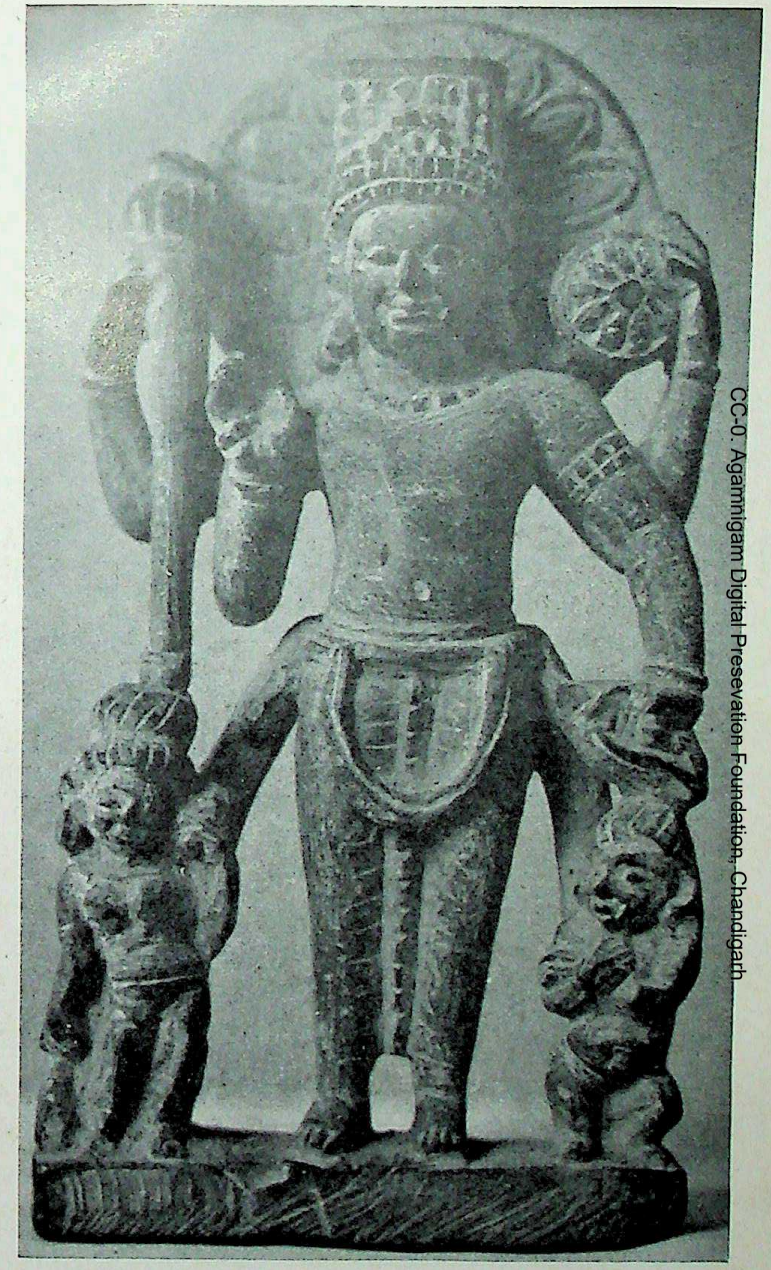

Fig. 7. Trivikrama Viṣṇu, 7th C. A.D., Bhavanagar Museum

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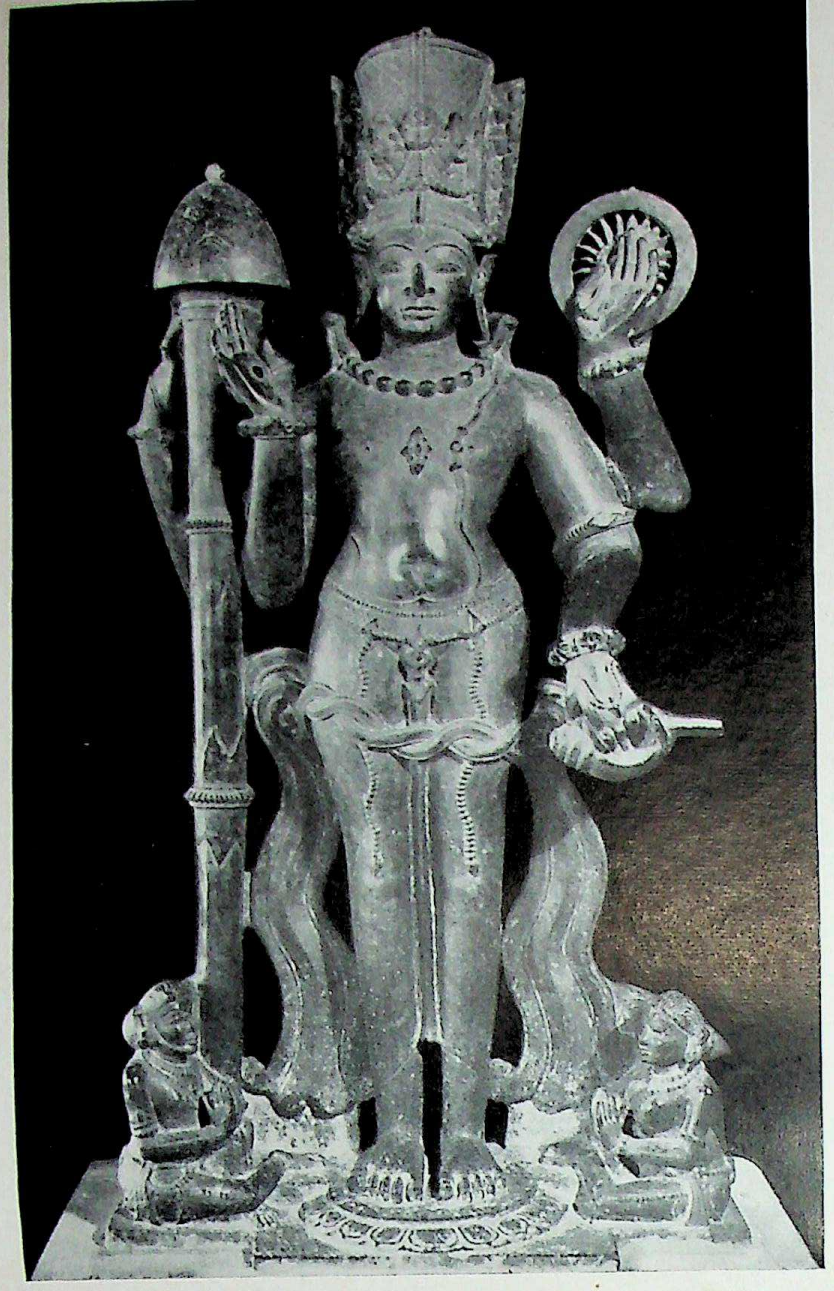

Fig. 8. Trivikrama Viṣṇu, 11th C. A.D., Lucknow Museum

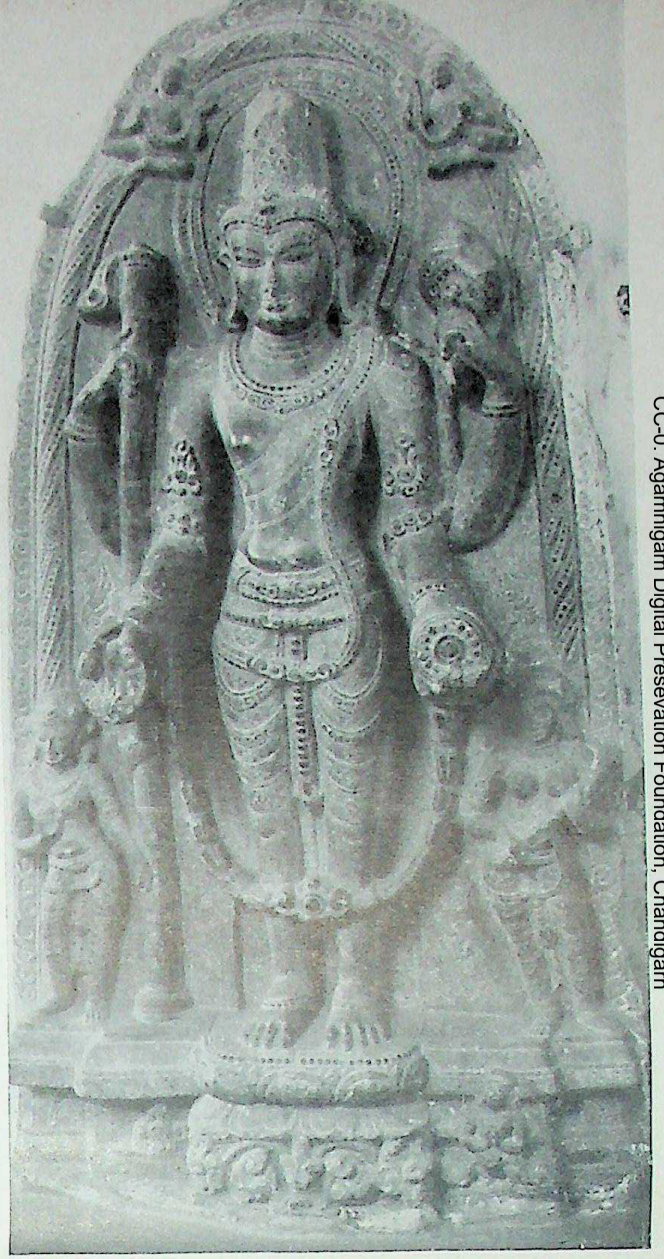

Fig. 9. Adhokṣaja Viṣṇu, 9th. C. A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta

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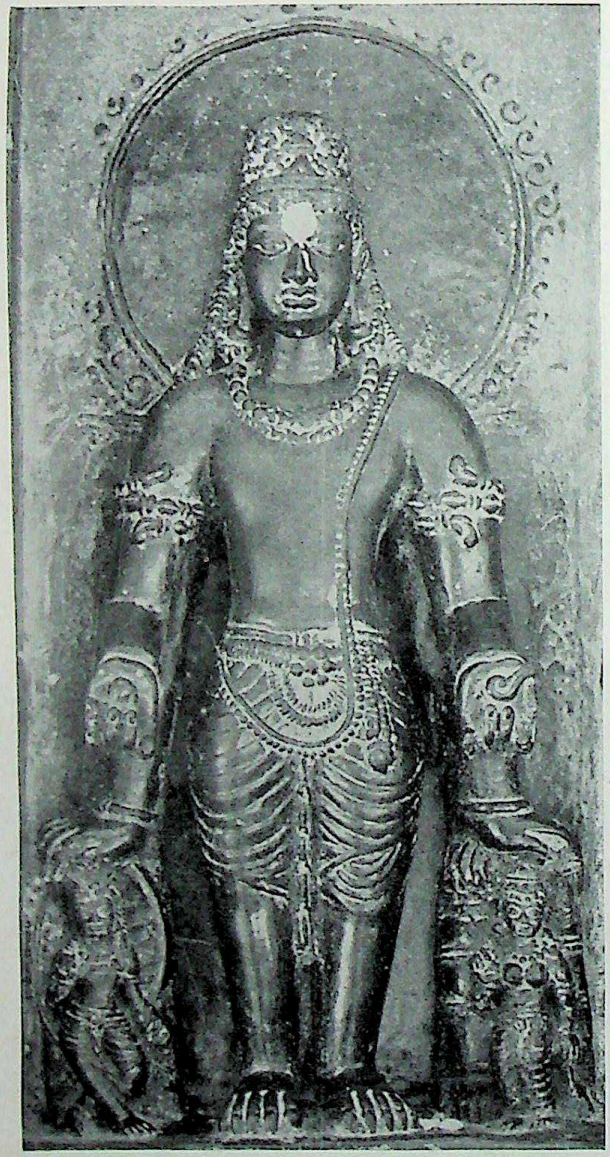

Fig. 10. Śrīdhara, 9th C. A.D., Mahant Collection, Bodha Gaya

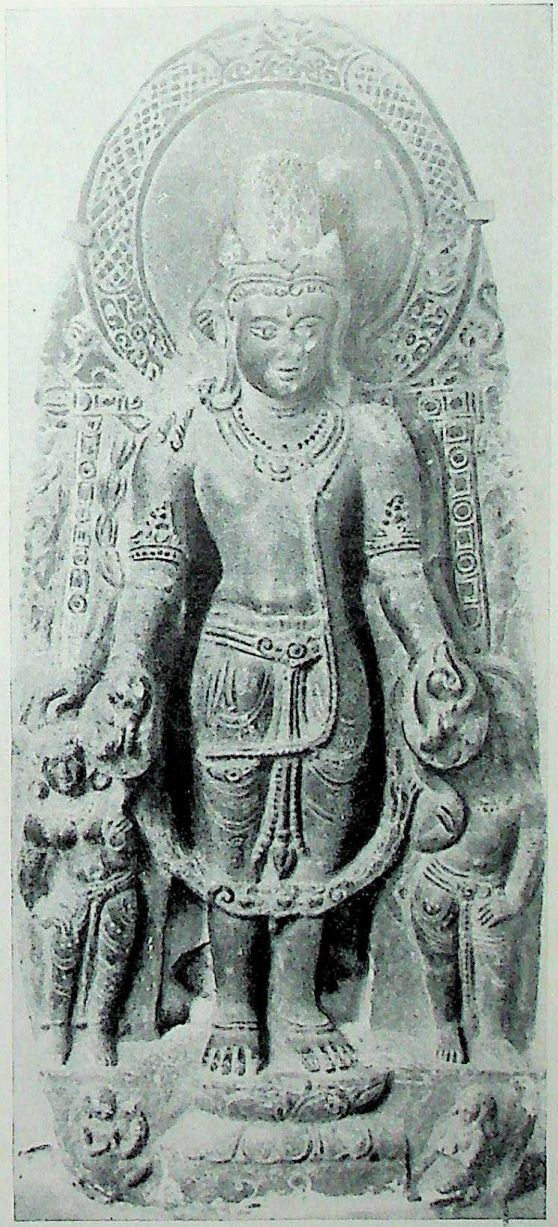

Fig. 11. Viṣṇu with citron fruit, 9th C. A.D. Indian Museum, Calcutta

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Fig. 12. Viṣṇu blowing the conch, 8th C. A.D., Nalanda Museum

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Fig. 13. Seated Viṣṇu, 3rd C. A.D., Mathura Museum

Fig. 14. Seated Viṣṇu, 10th C. A.D., Harihara Temple I, Osian, Jodhpur

Fig. 16.
Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 8th C. A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta

Fig. 15. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 8th C. A.D., Asutosh Museum, Calcutta

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Fig. 16.
Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 8th C. A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta

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Fig. 15. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 8th C. A.D., Asutosh Museum, Calcutta

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Fig. 17. Viṣṇu in *Mahārājalīlāsana,* 10th C. A.D., Bengal

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Fig. 18.
Viṣṇu under the serpent-hood,
5th C. A.D., Deogarh

Fig. 20.
Viṣnu standing under the serpent,
9th C. A.D.,
Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.
Calcutta

Fig. 19.
Viṣṇu under the serpent-hood,
5th C. A.D., Deogarh

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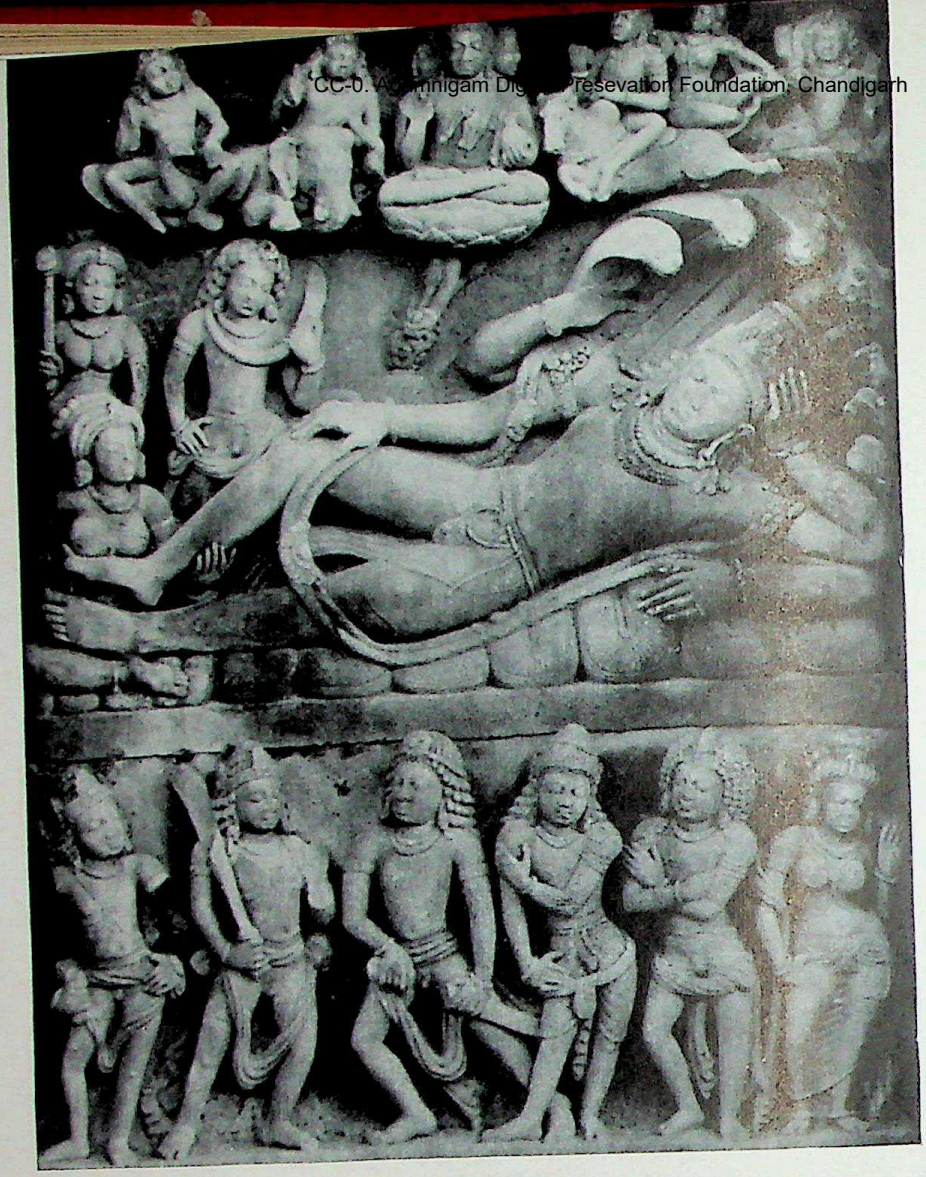

Fig. 21. Śeṣaśāyī, 5th C. A.D., Deogarh

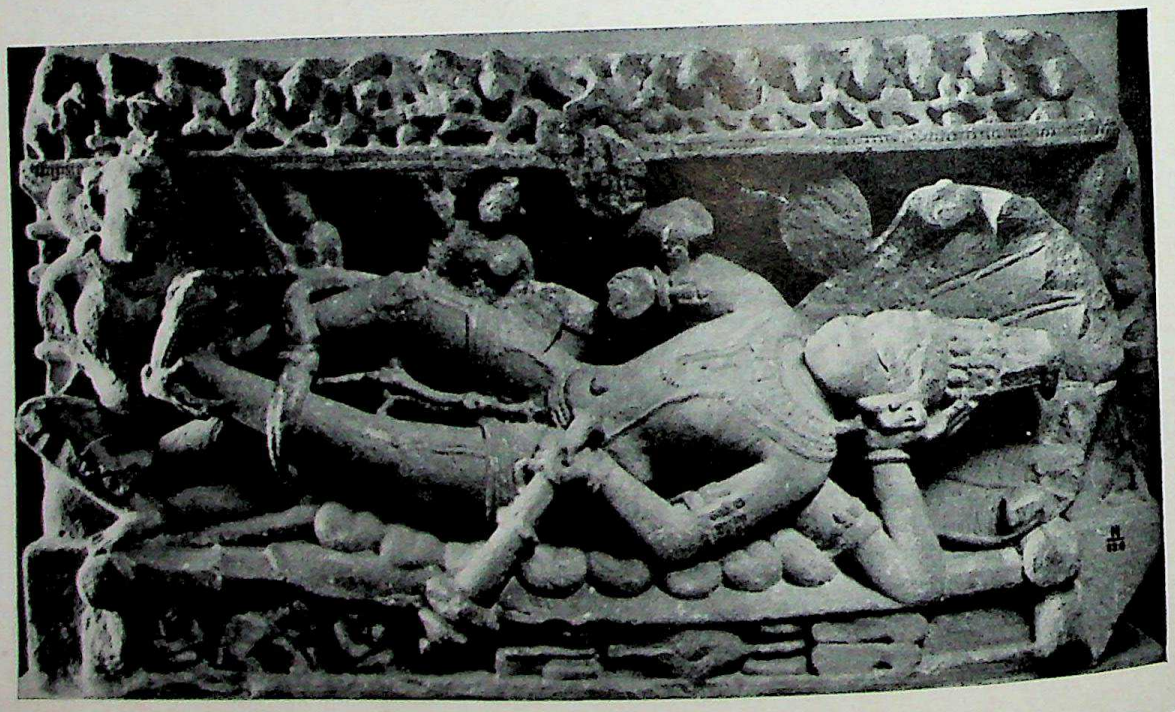

Fig. 22. Śeṣaśāyī, 10th C. A.D., Lucknow Museum

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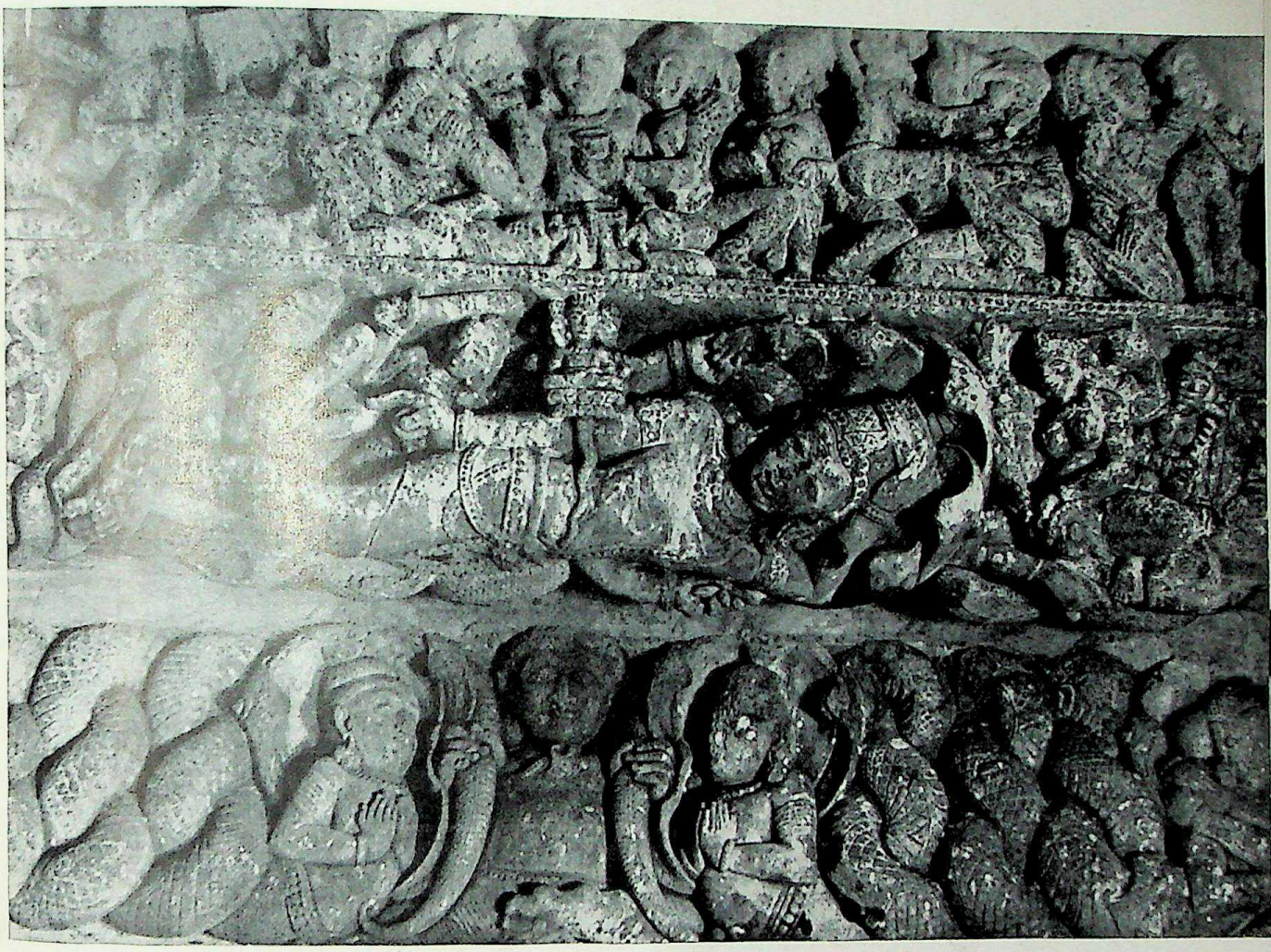

Fig. 23. Śeṣaśāyī, 6th C. A.D., Rajivalocana Temple, Rajim

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Fig. 24 Śeṣaśāyī, 7th-8th C. A.D., Mathura Museum

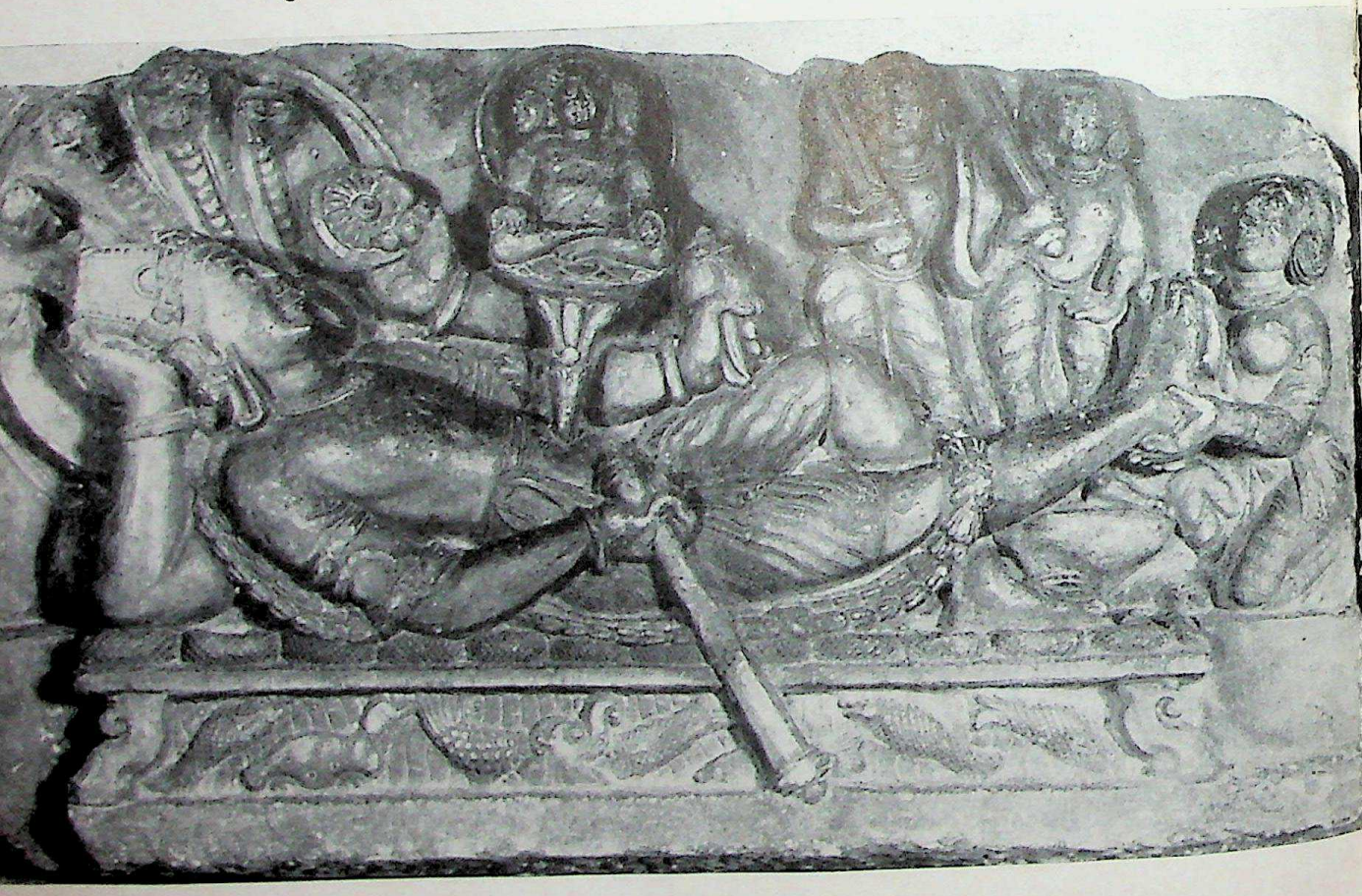

Fig. 25. Śeṣaśāyī, 10th C. A.D., Baijanatha

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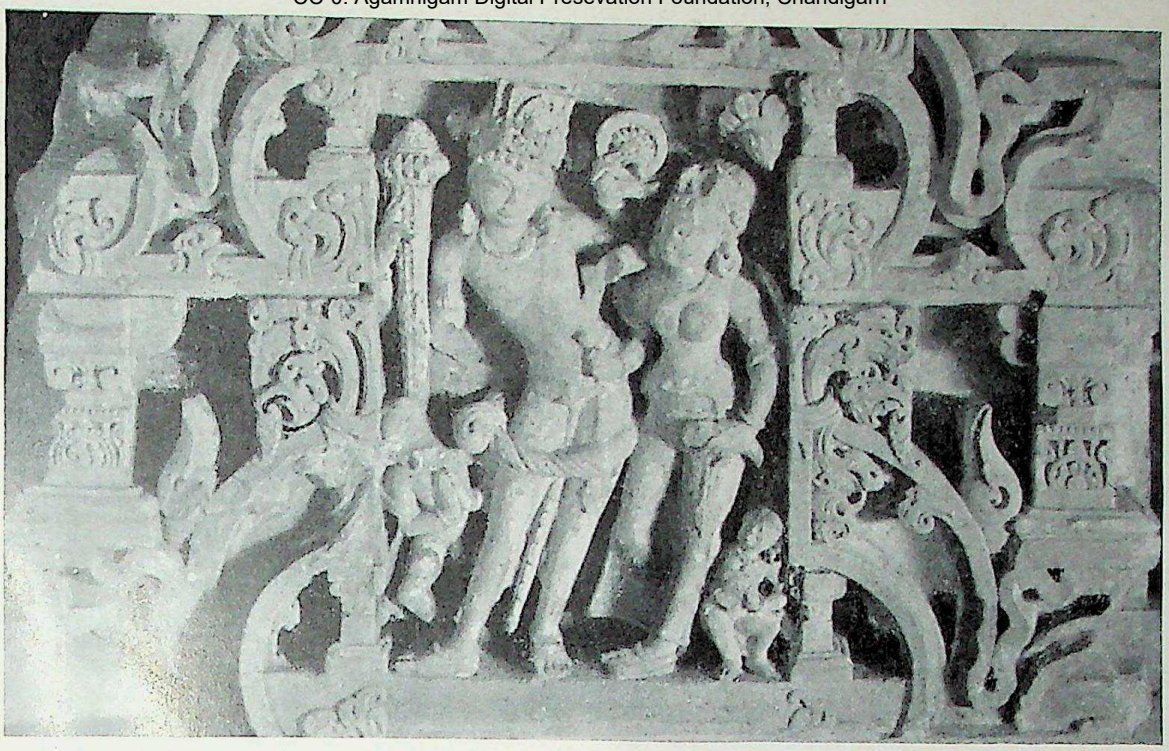

Fig. 26. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, 8th C. A.D., Amber Museum

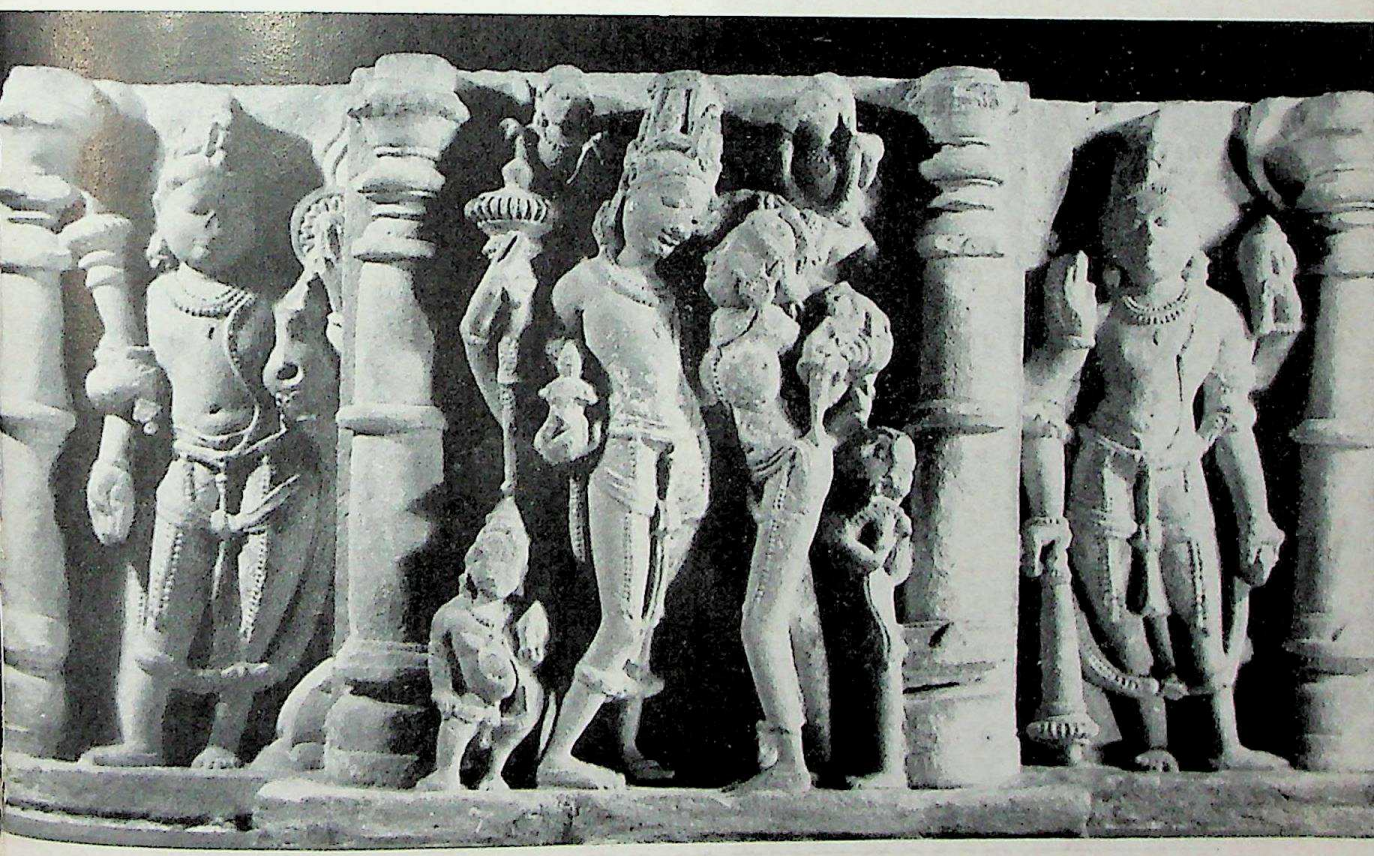

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Fig. 24 Śeṣaśāyī, 7th-8th C. A.D., Mathura Museum

Fig. 25. Śeṣaśāyī, 10th C. A.D., Baijanatha

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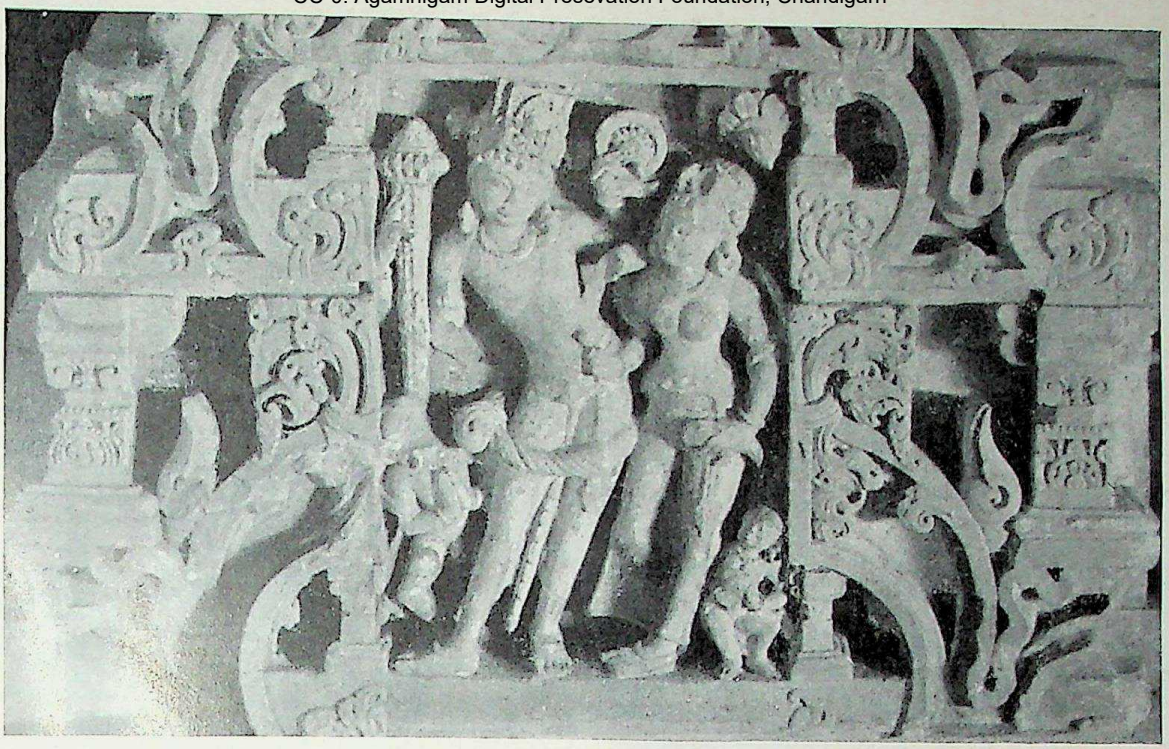

Fig. 26. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, 8th C. A.D., Amber Museum

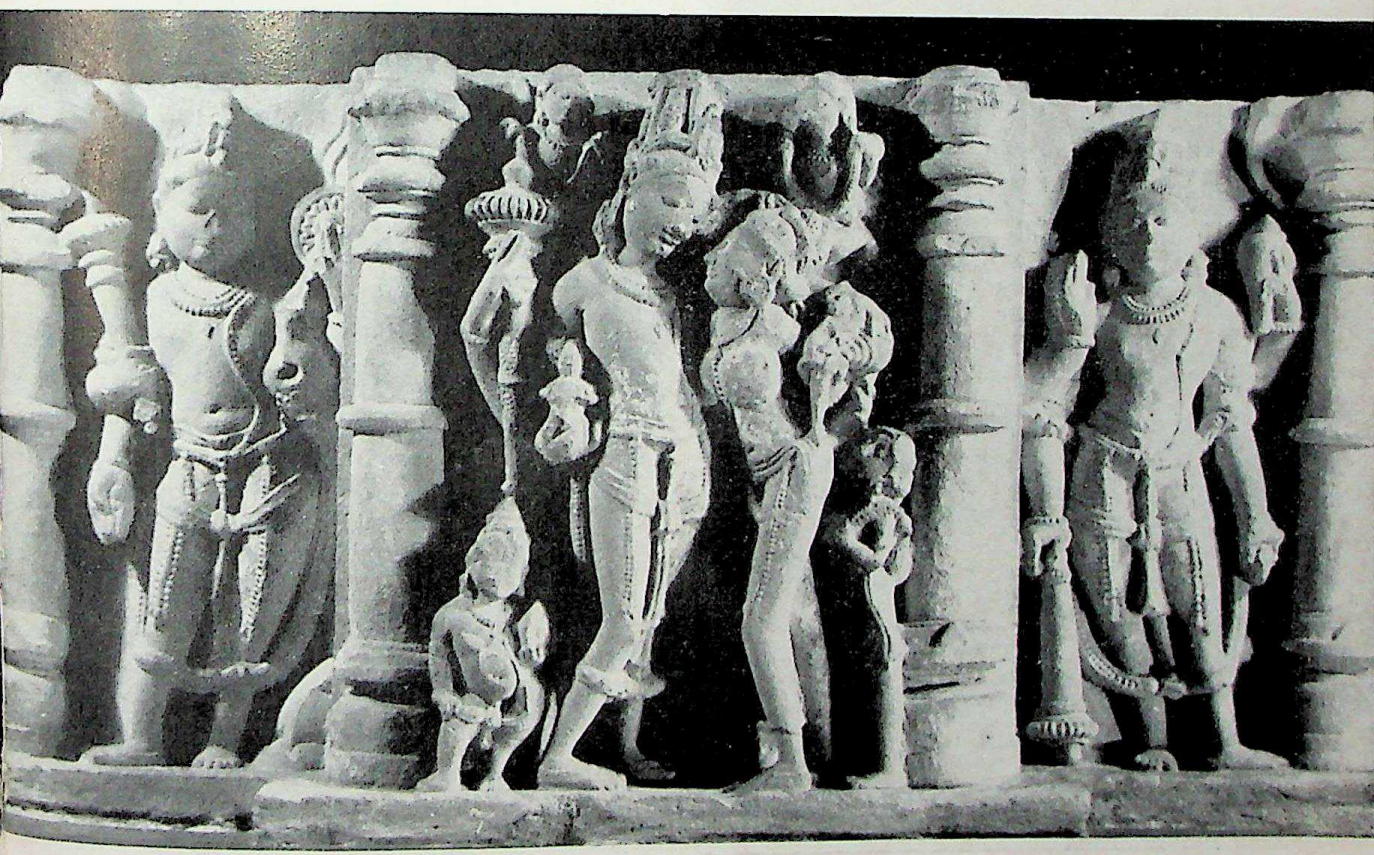

Fig. 27. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, 9th C. A.D., Allahabad Museum

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Fig. 28. Laksmī-Nārāyaṇa on Garuḍa, 9th C. A.D., Srinagar Museum

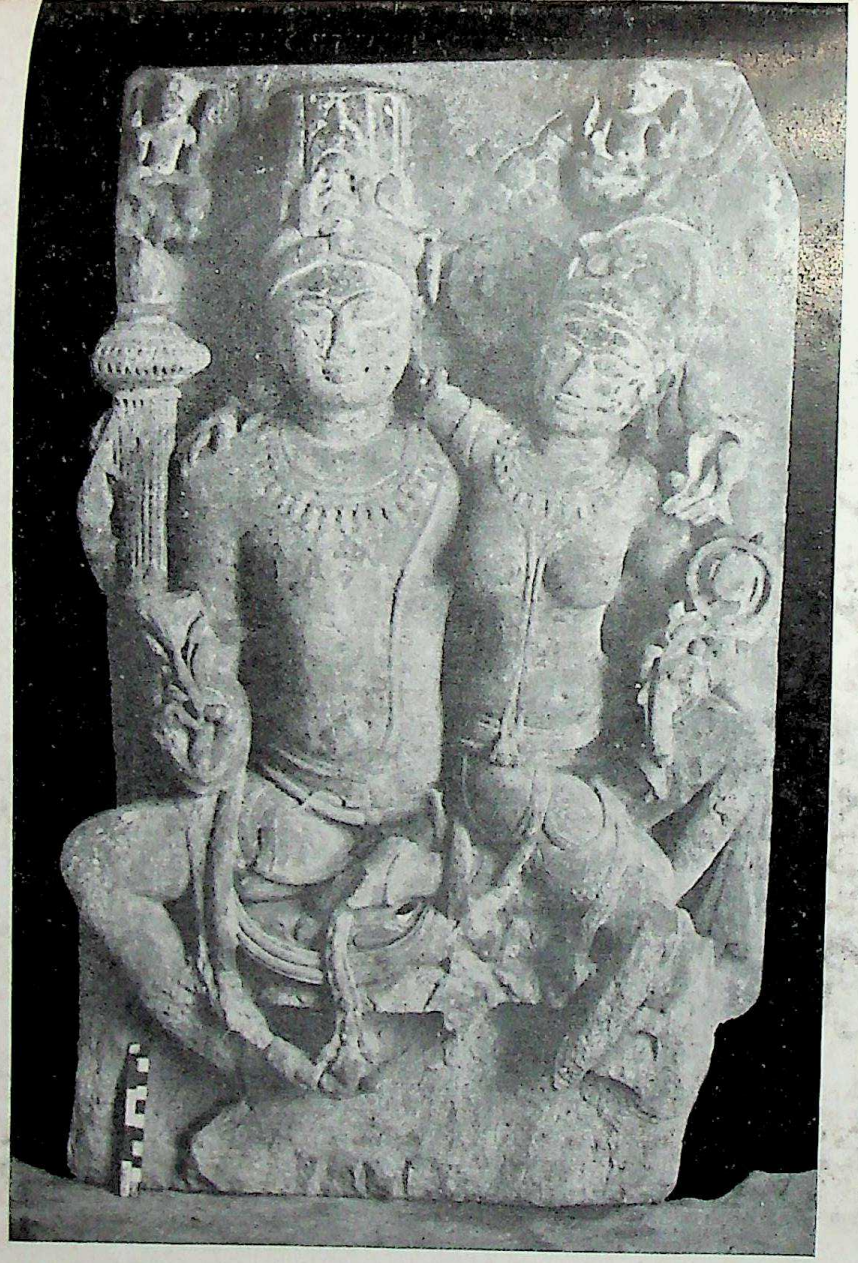

Fig. 29. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, 9th C. A.D., Nagara, Cambay

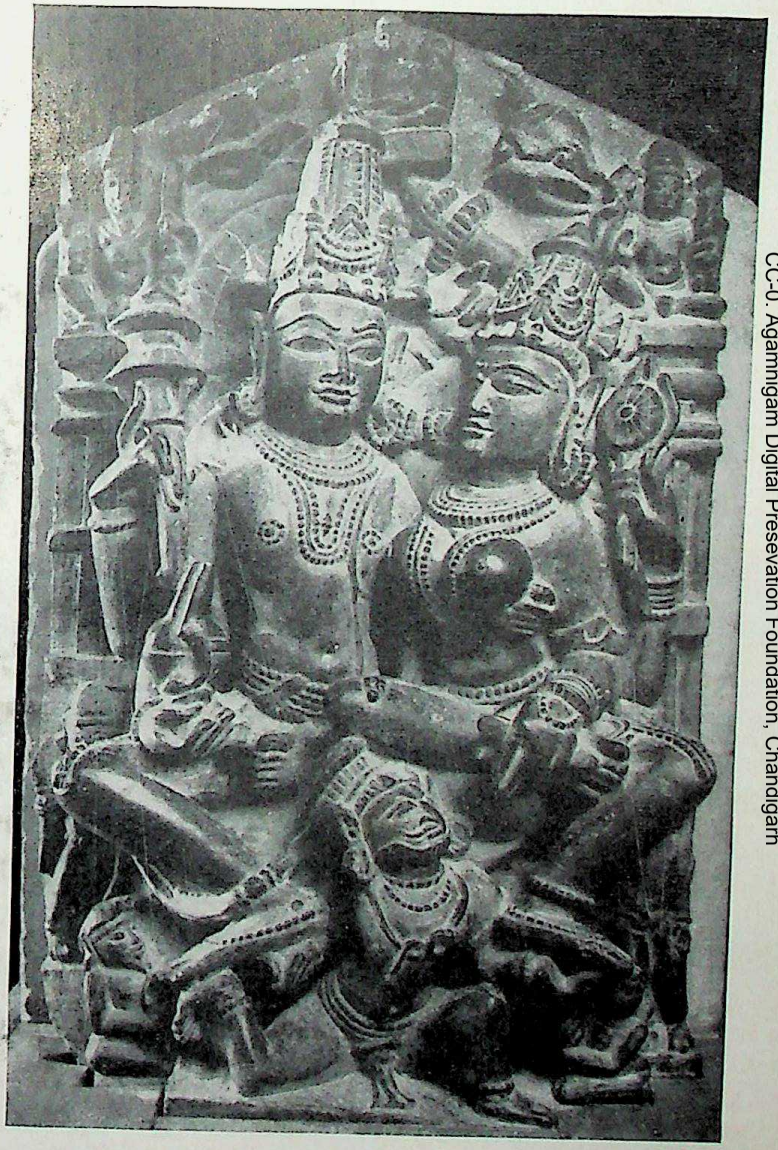

Fig. 30. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, 10th C. A.D., Lucknow Museum

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Fig. 31. Caturmūrti, 4th C. A.D., Mathura Museum

Fig. 32.
Vaikuṇṭha, 6th C. A.D.,
Mathura Museum

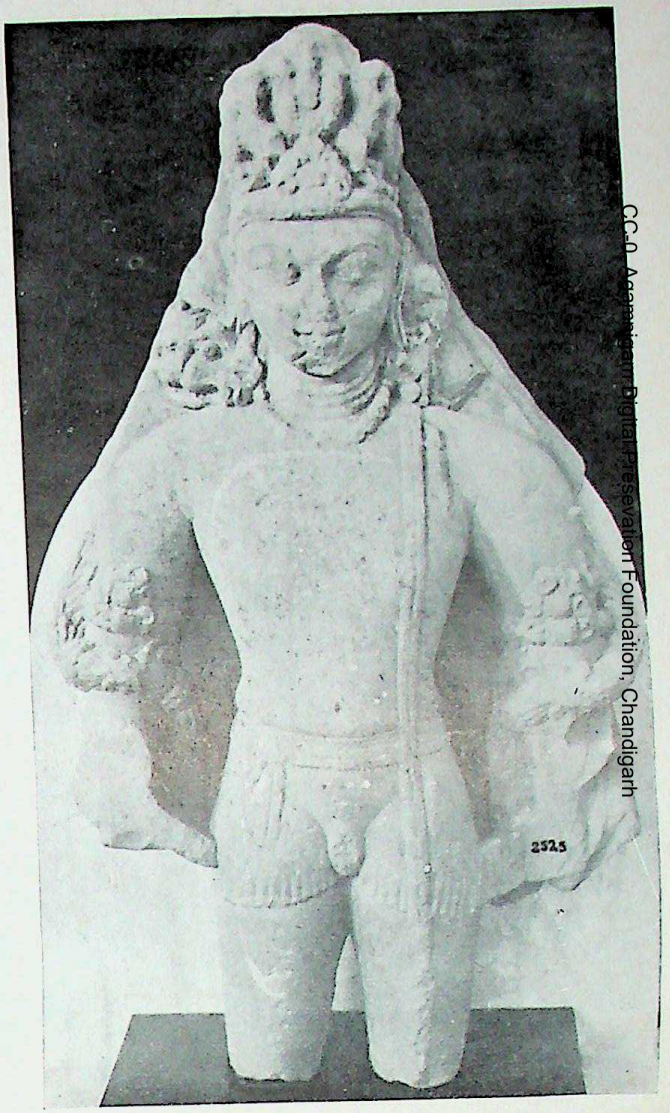

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Fig. 33.
Vaikuntha (front and back),
from Kashmir, 9th C. A.D.,
Prince of Wales Museum,
Bombay

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Fig. 34.
Vaikuṇṭha, 11th C. A.D.,
Jhajjar

Fig. 35. Vaikuṇṭha on Garuḍa, 9th C. A.D., Srinagar Museum

Fig. 36. Vaikuṇṭha on Garuḍa, 8th C. A.D., Chamba

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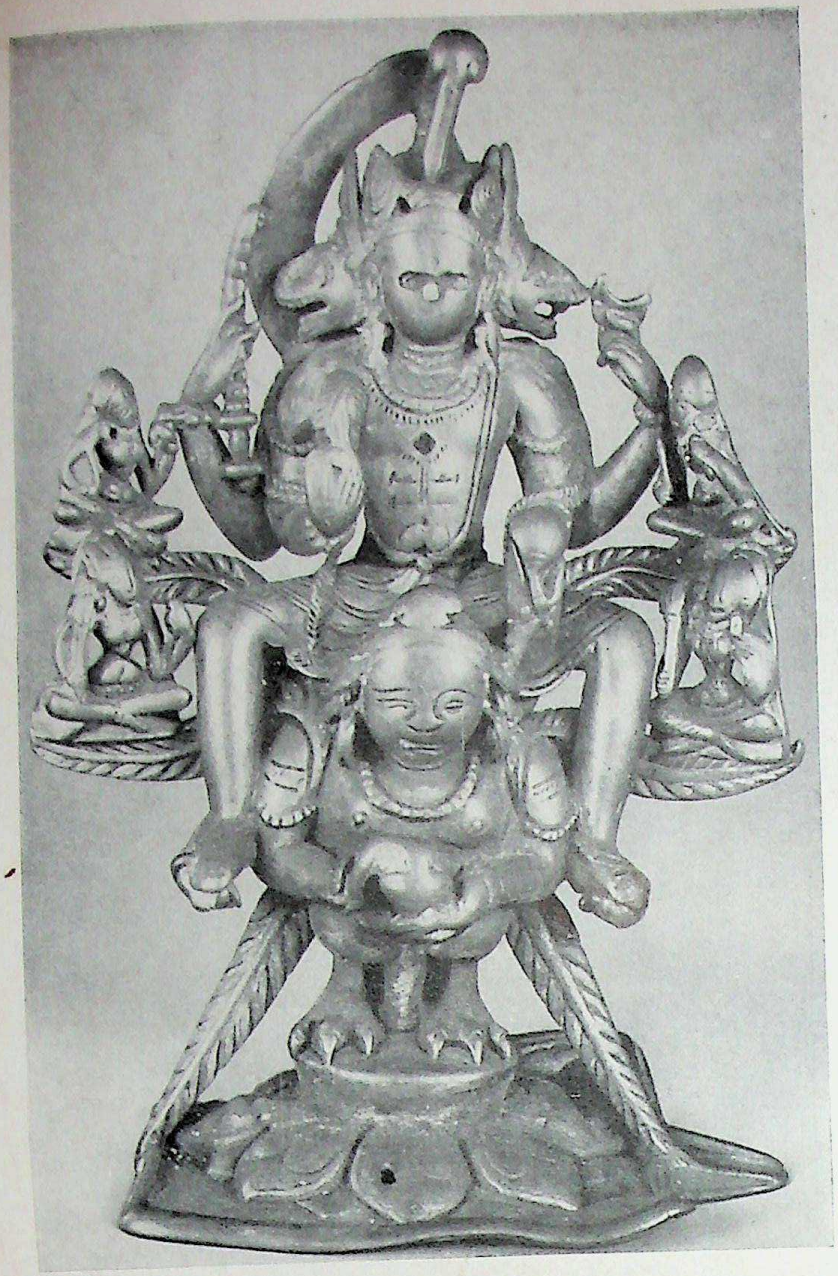

Fig. 37. Vaikuṇṭha-Lakṣmī, 12th C. A.D., Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay

Fig. 38. Back of Fig. 37

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Fig. 39. Eight-handed Vaikuṇṭha, 9th C. A.D., Jhalawar Museum

Fig. 40.
Ten-handed Vaikuṇṭha,
11th C. A.D.,
Sasbahu Temple, Nagda

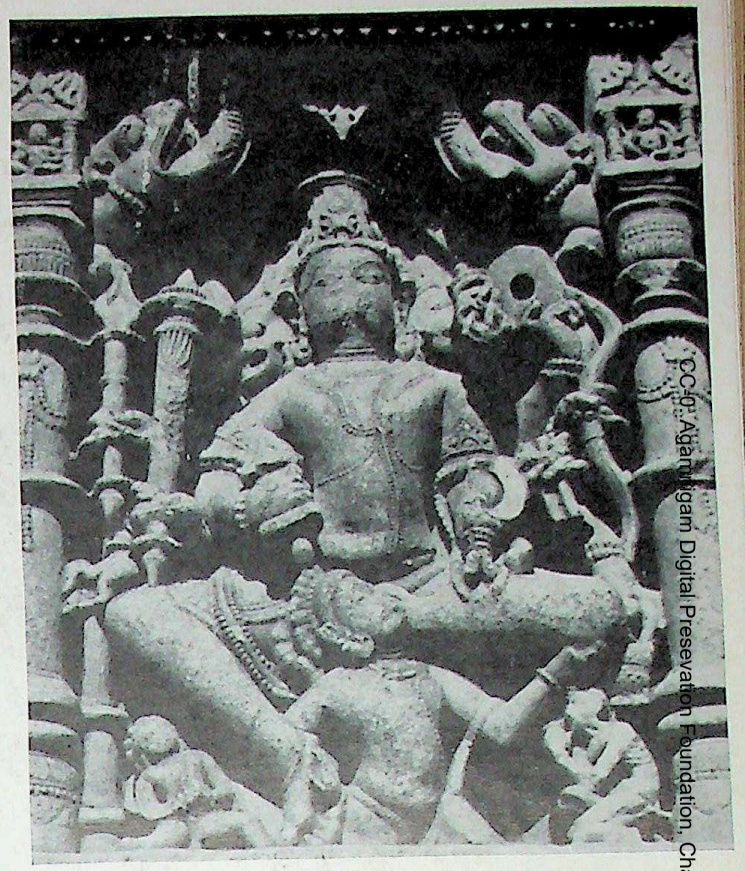

Fig. 41.
Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 6th C. A.D.,
Mathura Museum

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

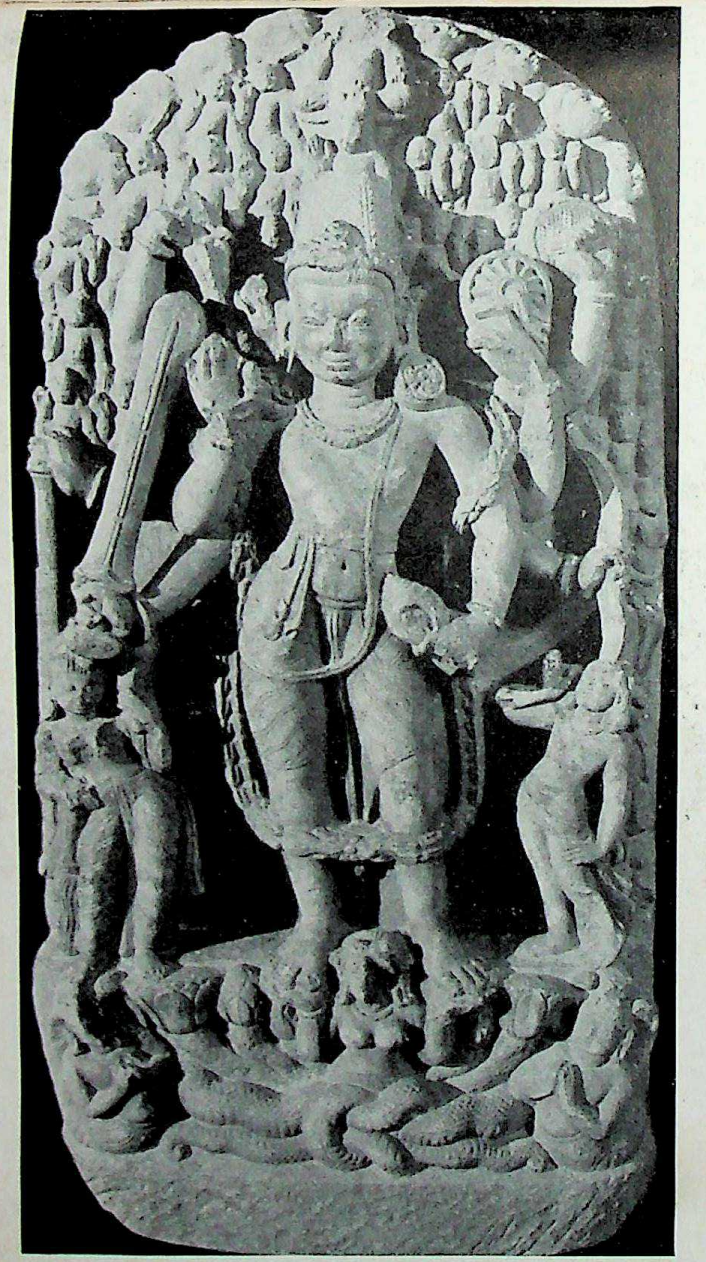

Fig. 42. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 10th C. A.D., Baijanatha

Fig. 43. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 9th C. A.D., Samalaji

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Fig. 44.
Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu,
10th C. A.D.,
Gwalior Museum

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Fig. 45
Harihara, 5th C. A.D.,
Patna Museum

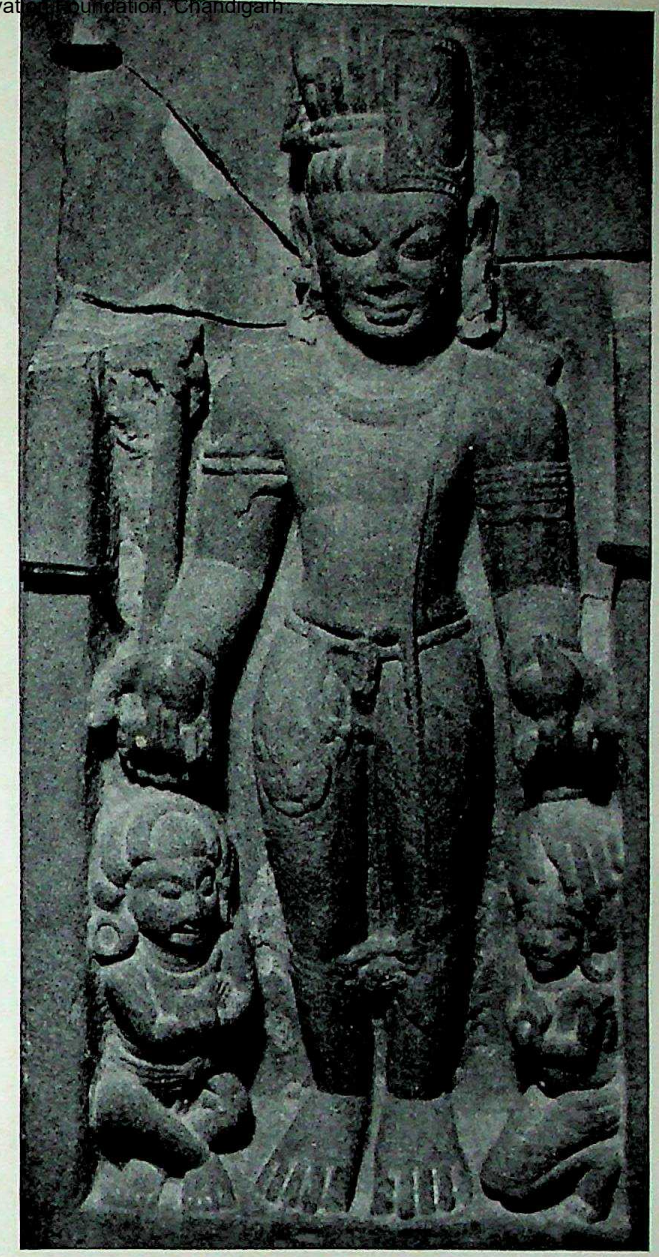

Fig. 46.
Harihara, 9th C. A.D.,
Mahant Collection, Bodha Gaya

Fig. 47. Harihara, 11th C. A.D., Rajasthan

Fig. 48. Viṣṇu Lokeśvara, 9th C. A.D., Asutosh Museum, Calcutta

Fig. 49. Harihara flanked by Sūrya and Buddha, 11th C. A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta

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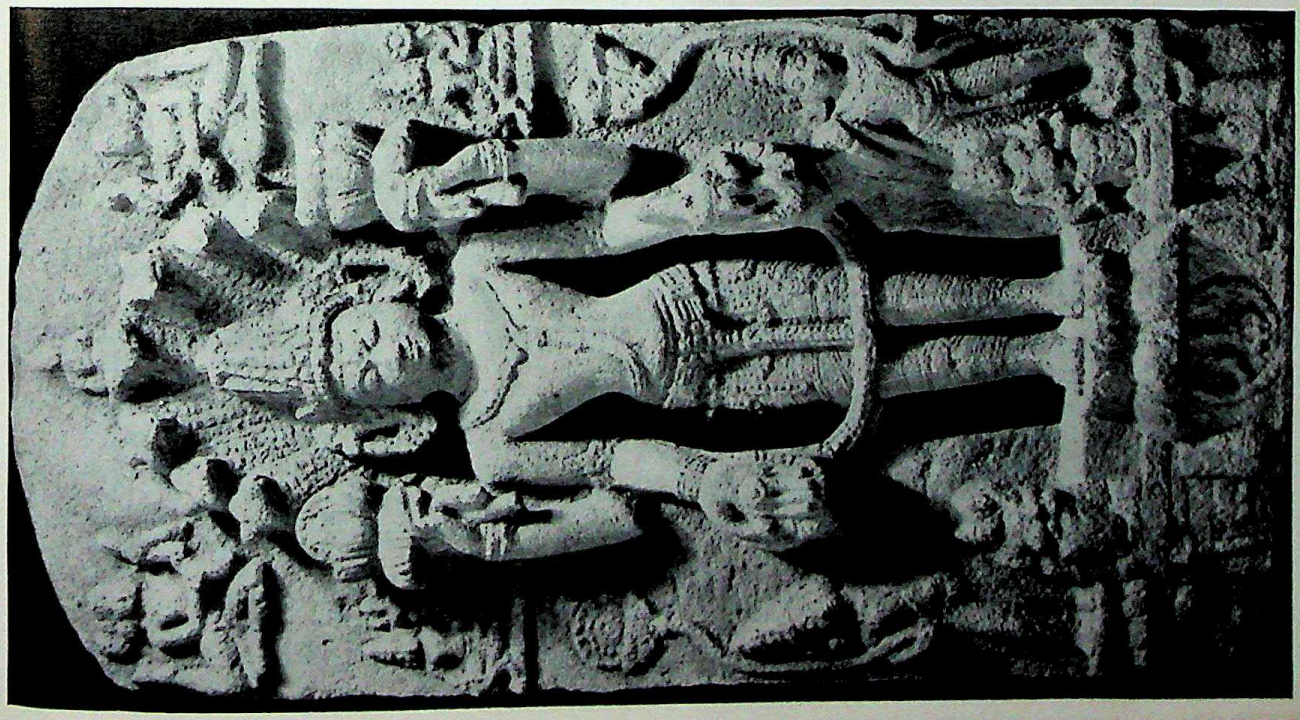

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Fig. 50. Sūryanārāyaṇa, 9th C. A D., Jhalawar Museum

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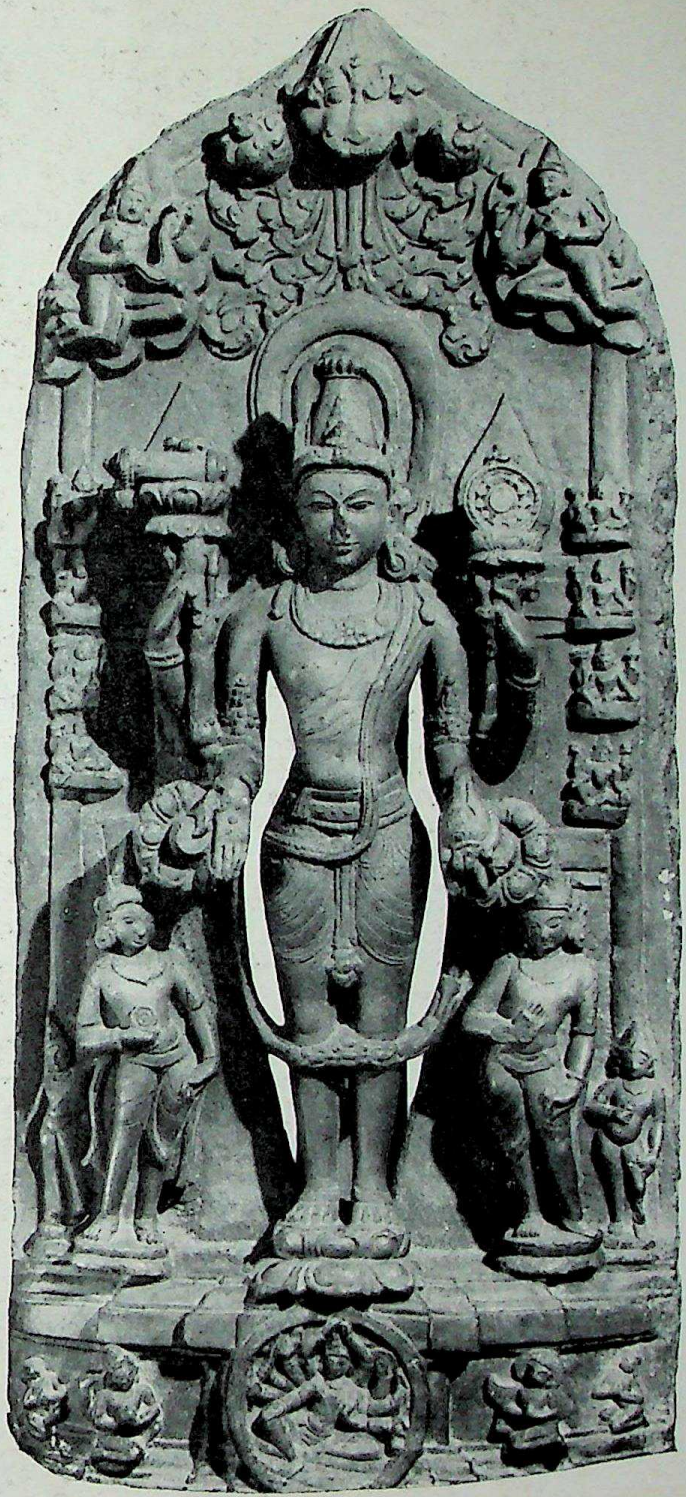

Fig. 51.
Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara,
11th C. A.D., National
Museum, New Delhi

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Fig. 52. Yoganārāyaṇa, *C.* 12th C. A.D., Mathura Museum

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Fig. 53. Matsya, *C.* 10th C. A.D., Chamba

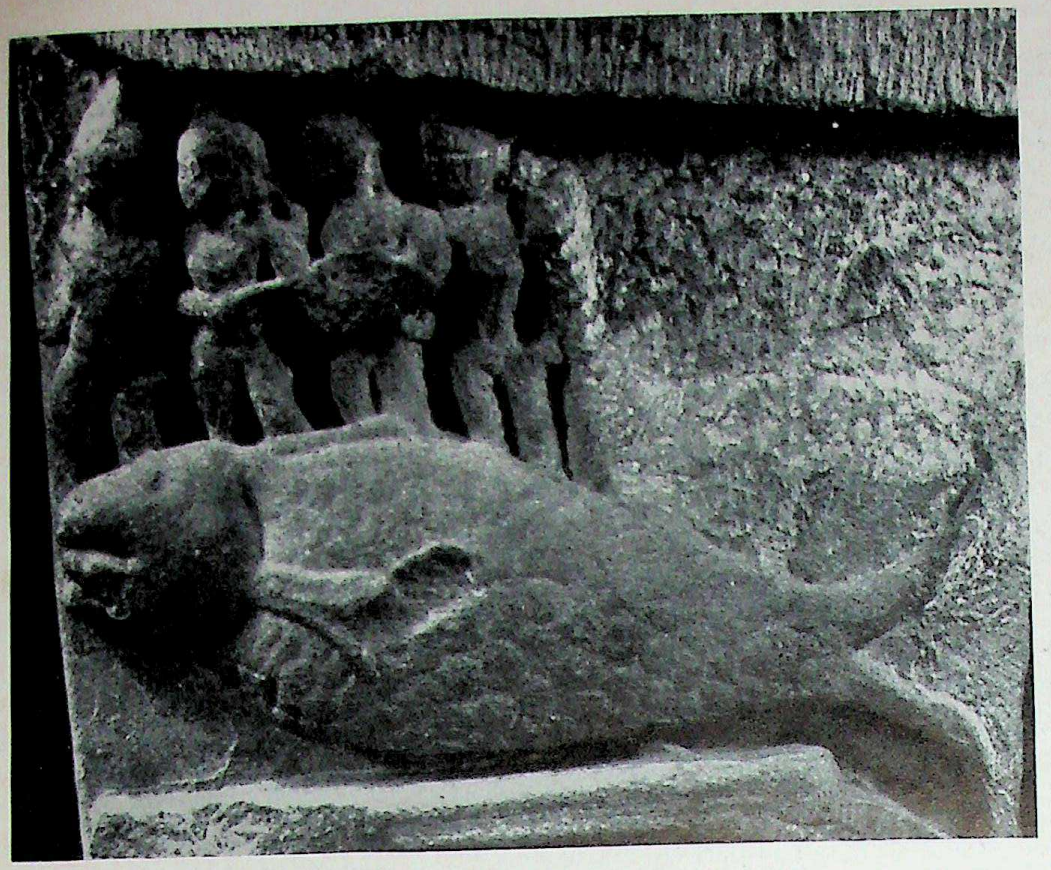

Fig. 54. Matsya, 9th C. A.D., Gwalior Museum

Fig. 55. Kūrma, 9th C.A.D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras

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Fig. 56. Matsya, 9th C. A.D., Udaipur Museum

Fig. 57. Kūrma, 10th C. A.D., Gwalior Museum

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Fig. 58. Varāha, 2nd. C. A.D.,
Mathura Museum

Fig. 59.
Varāha, 5th C. A.D., Badoh

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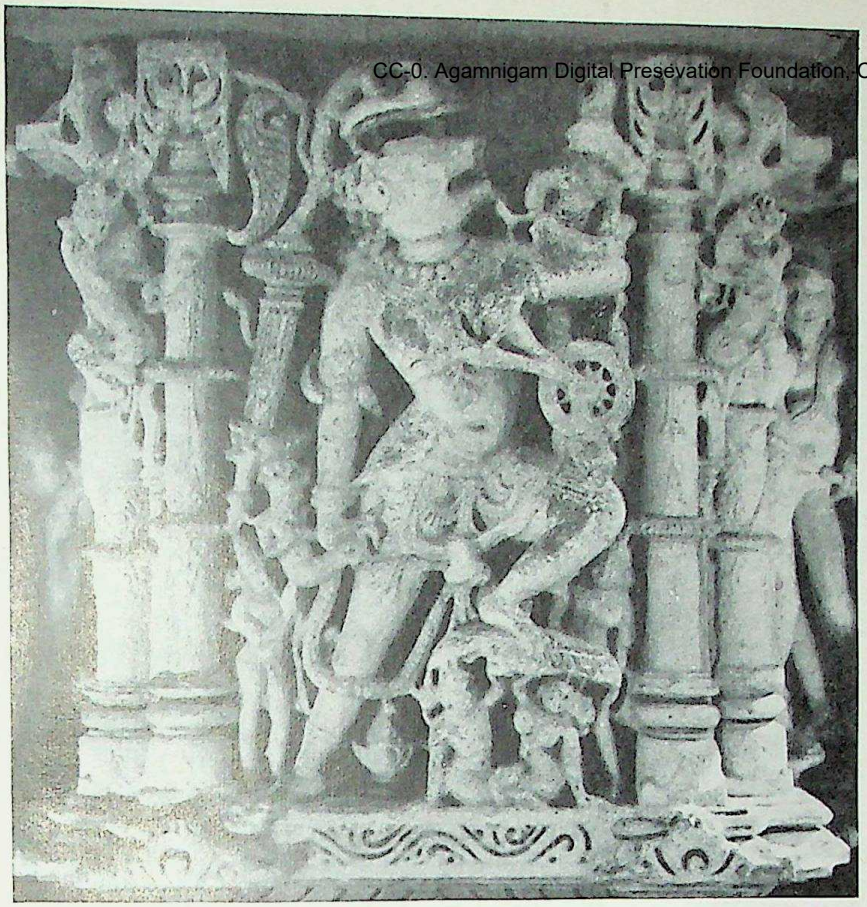

Fig. 60. Varāha, 9th C. A.D., Sachia Mata Temple, Osian, Jodhpur

Fig. 61. Varāha, 7th C. A.D., Ramacandra Temple, Rajim

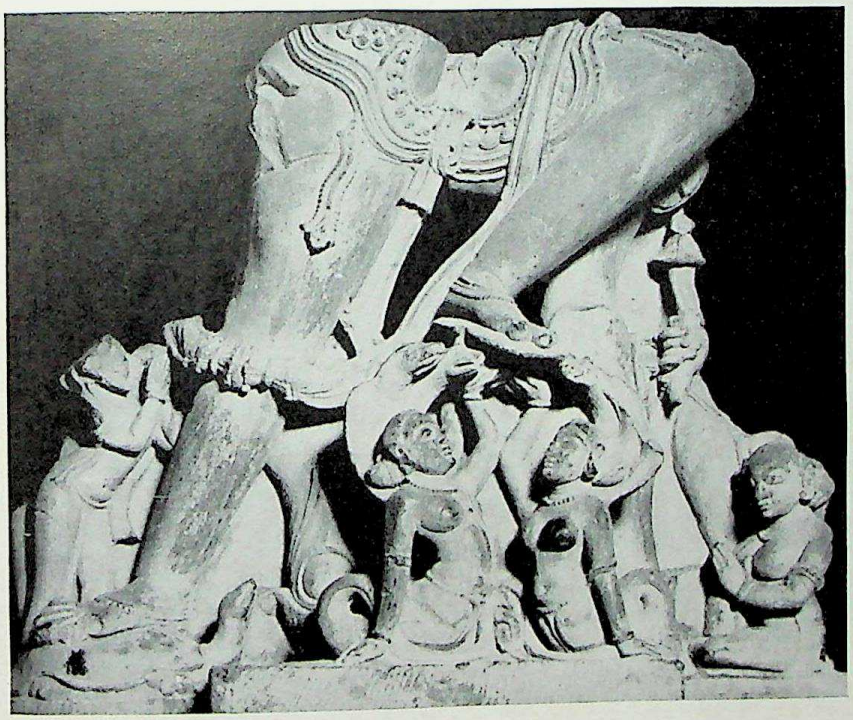

Fig. 62. Varāha, 9th C. A.D., Lucknow Museum

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Fig. 63. Varāha, 9th C. A.D., Jhalawar Museum

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

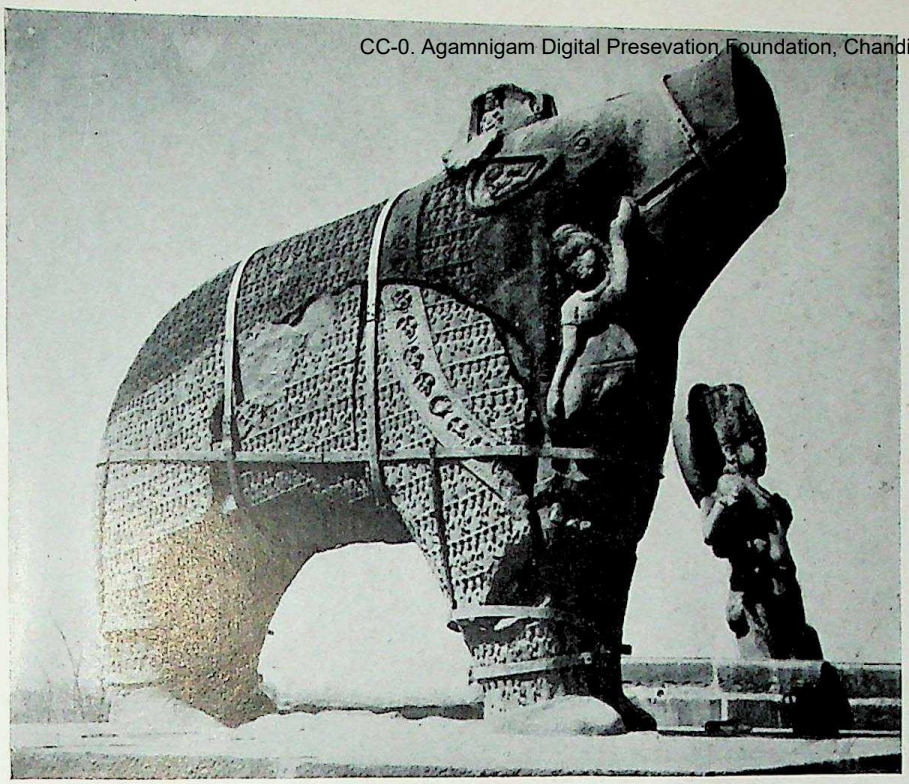

Fig. 64. Mahā-Varāha,
5th C. A.D., Eran, Sagar

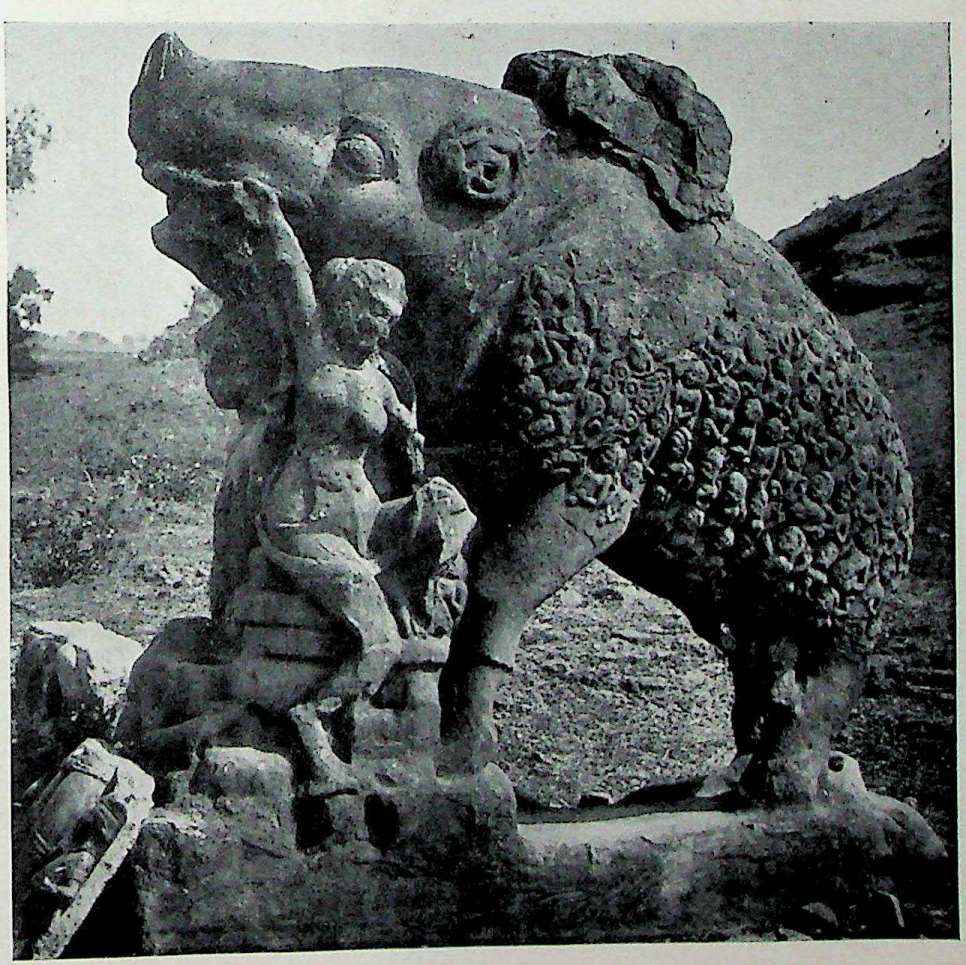

Fig. 65.
Mahā-Varāha,
6th C. A D.,
Aphsad, Gaya

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Fig. 66. Mahā-Varāha, 10th C. A.D., Jhalawar Museum

Fig. 67.
Nṛsiṁha, 5th C. A.D.,
Deogarh

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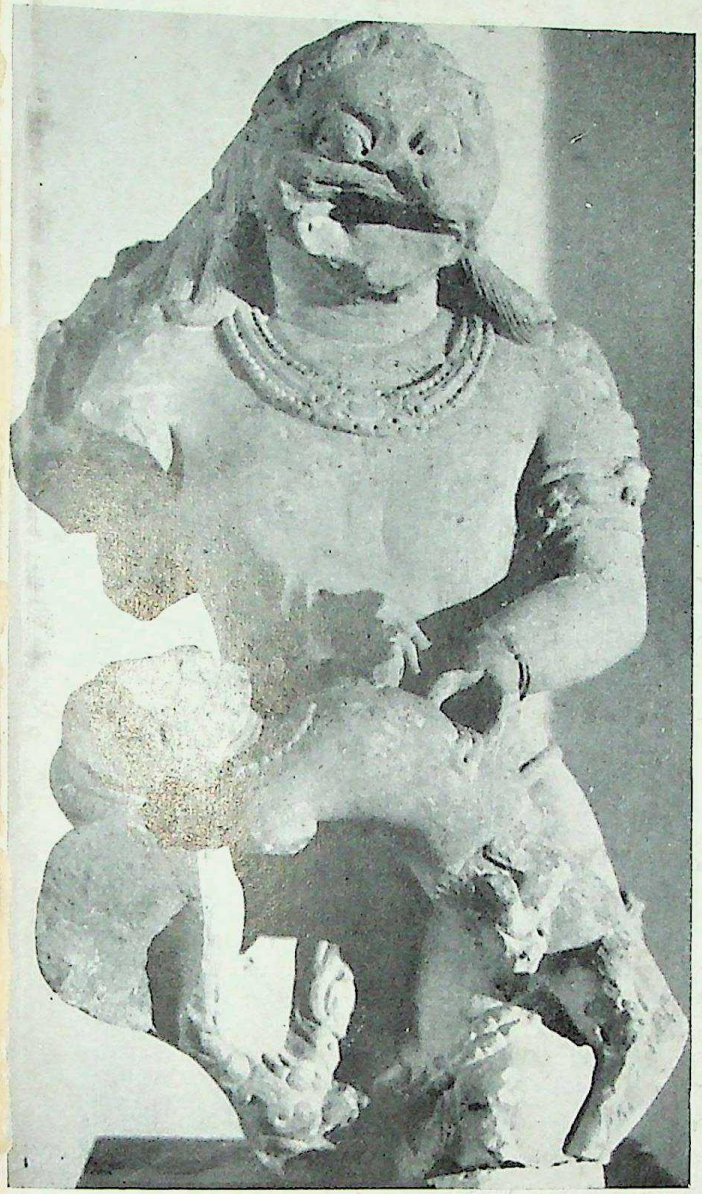

Fig. 68.
Nṛsiṁha, 6th C. A.D.,
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras

Fig. 69.
Nṛsiṁha, 5th-6th C. A.D.,
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras

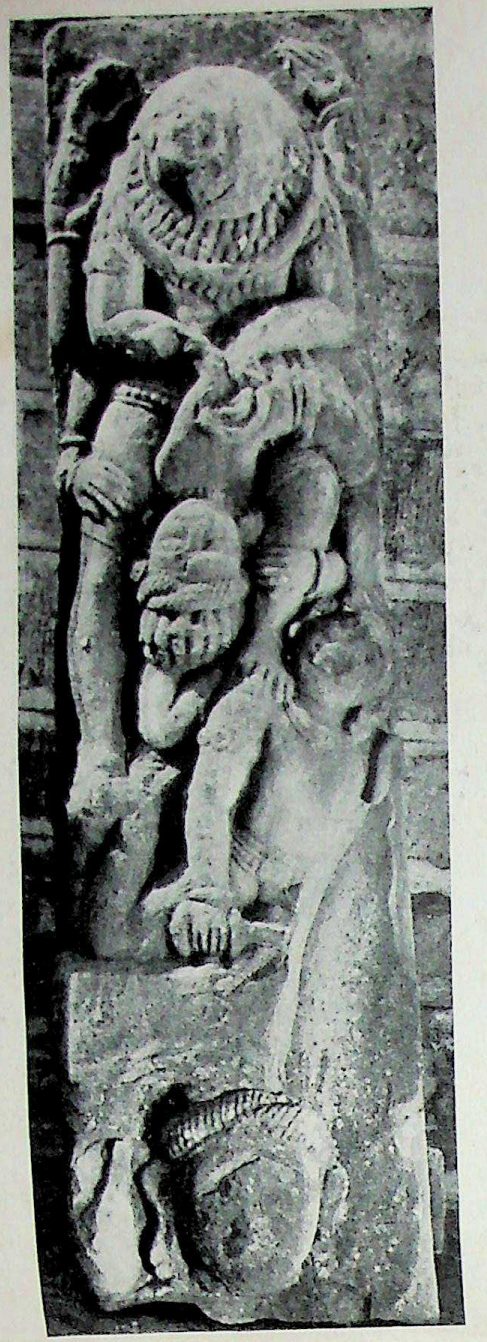

Fig. 70.
Nṛsiṁha, 7th C. A.D.,
Laksmana Temple, Sirpur

Fig. 71.
Nṛsiṁha, 11th C. A.D.,
West Bengal Govt.
Museum, Calcutta

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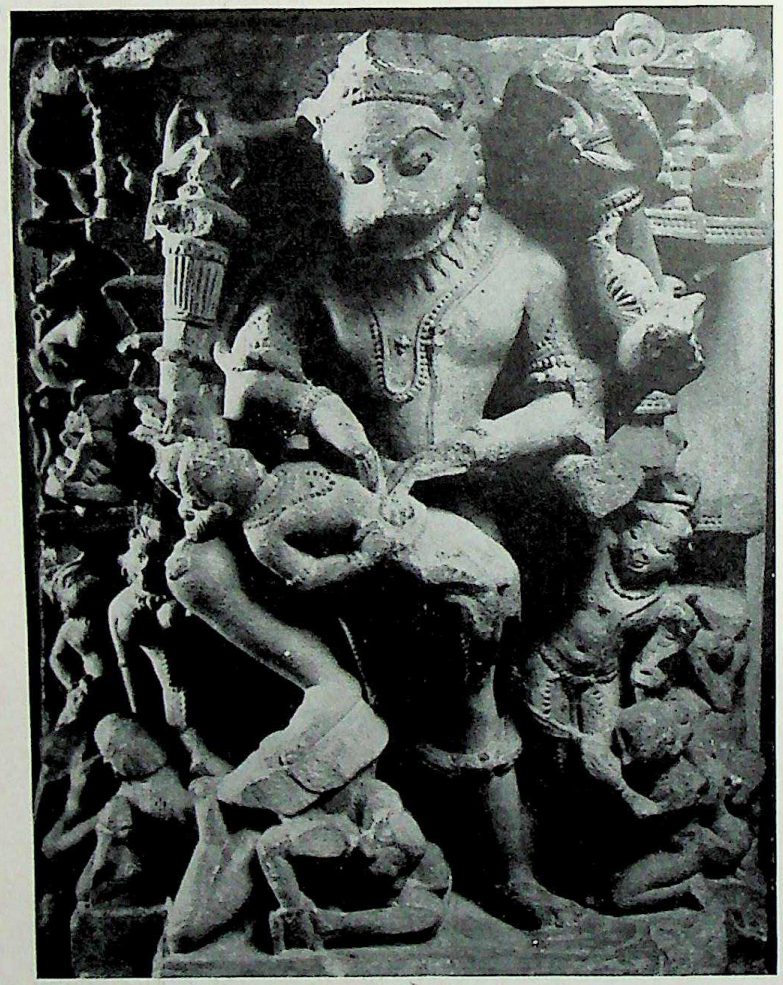

Fig.72. Nṛsiṁha, 9th C. A,D., Lucknow Museum

Fig. 73.
Vāmana, 5th C. A.D., Allahabad Museum

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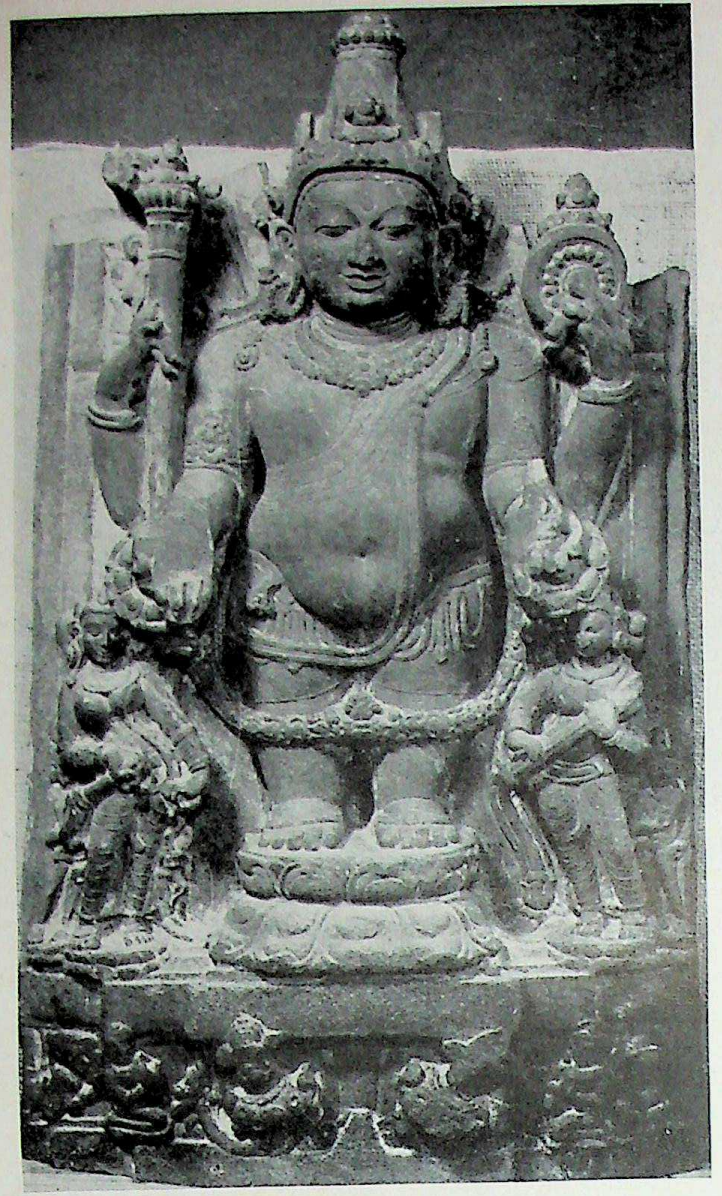

Fig. 74. Vāmana, 9th C. A.D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras

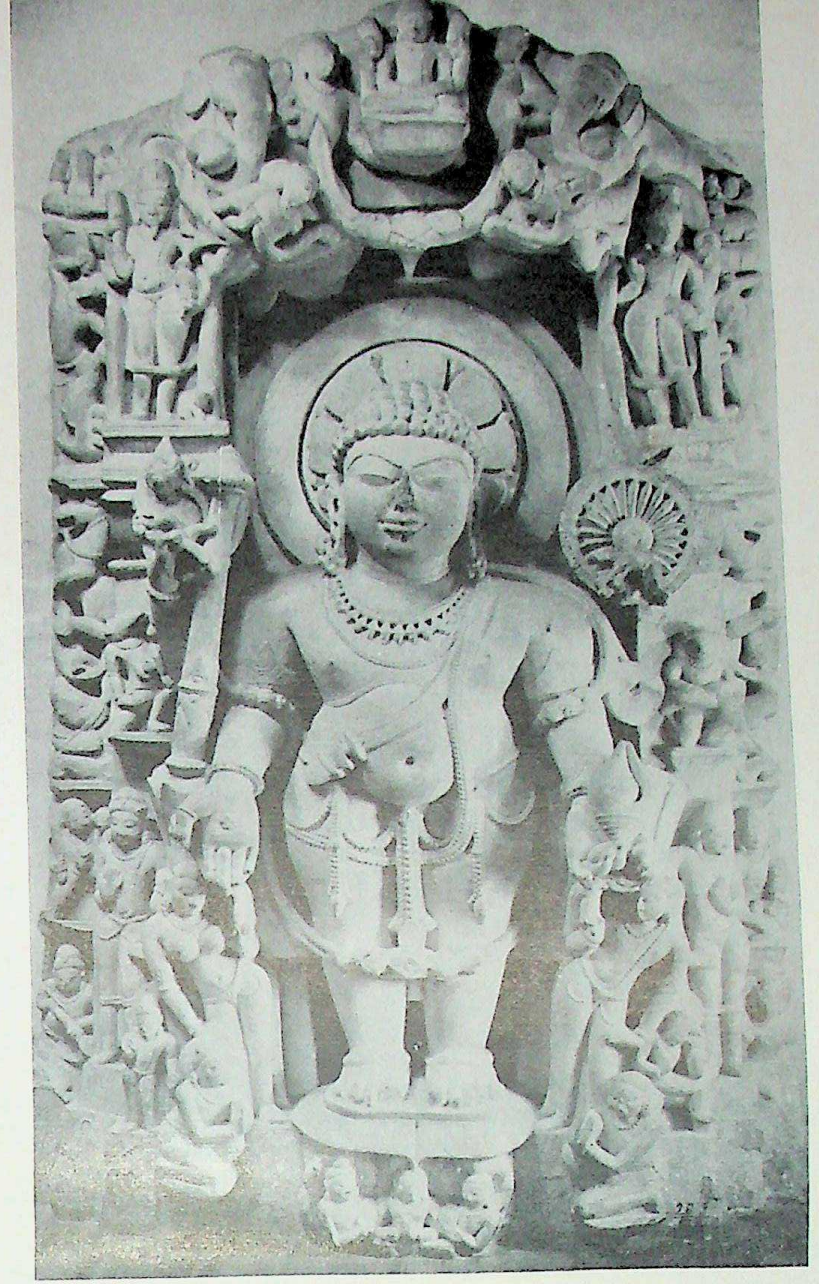

Fig. 75. Vāmana, 9th C. A.D., Gwalior Museum

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Fig. 76. Vāmana-Trivikrama, 9th C. A.D., Harihara Temple I, Osian, Jodhpur

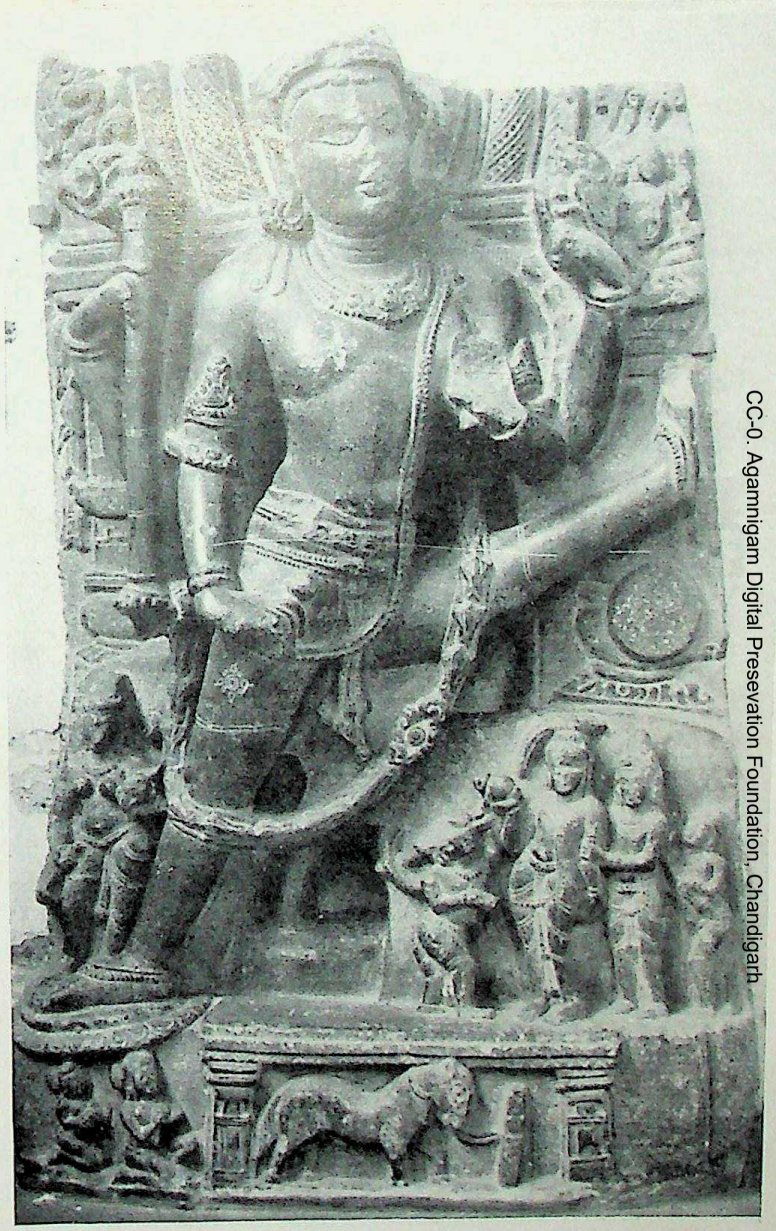

Fig. 77. Vāmana-Trivikrama, 8th C. A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta

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CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Fig. 78. Vāmana-Trivikrama, 10th C. A.D., Gwalior Museum

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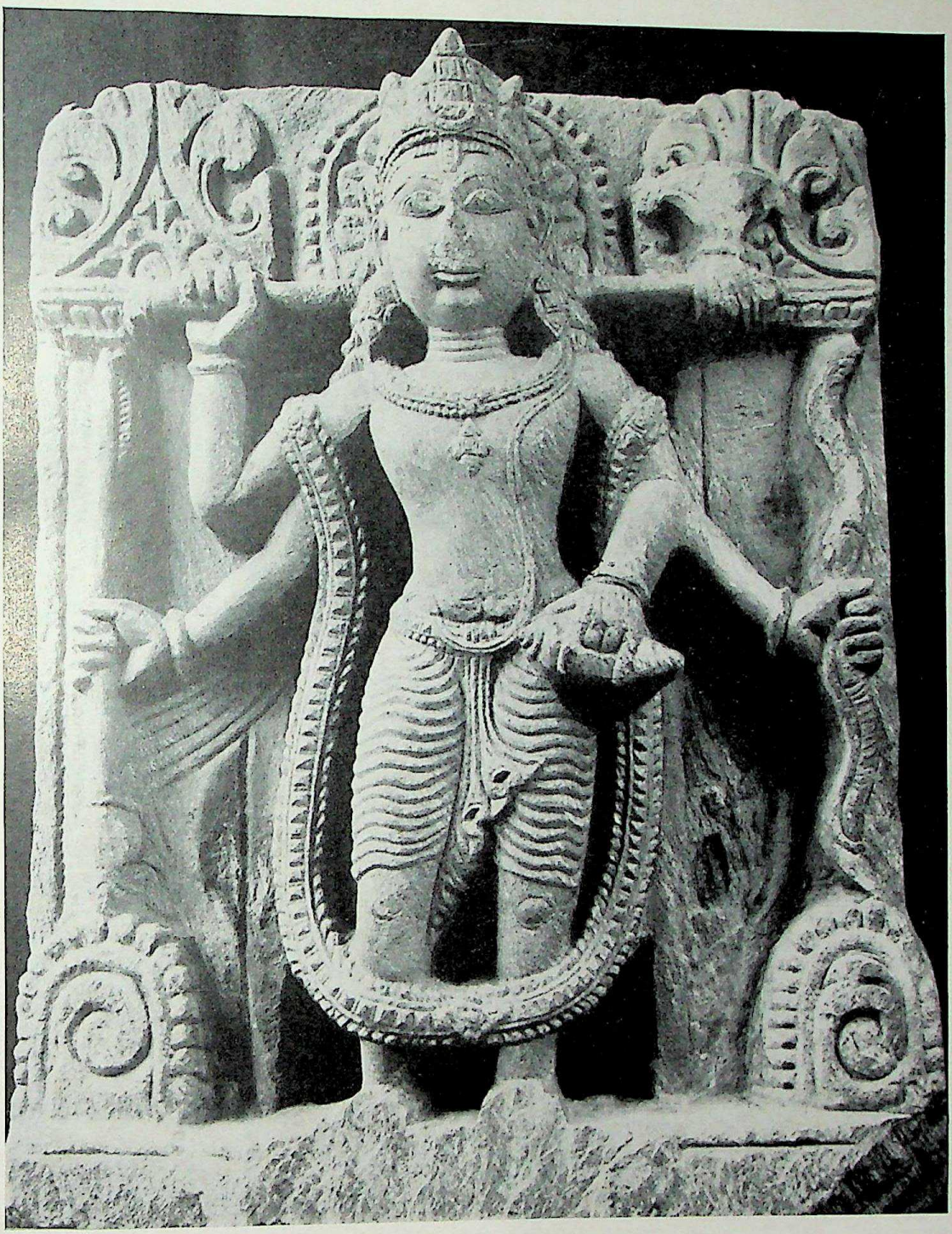

Fig. 79. Paraśurāma, 14th C. A.D., Chamba

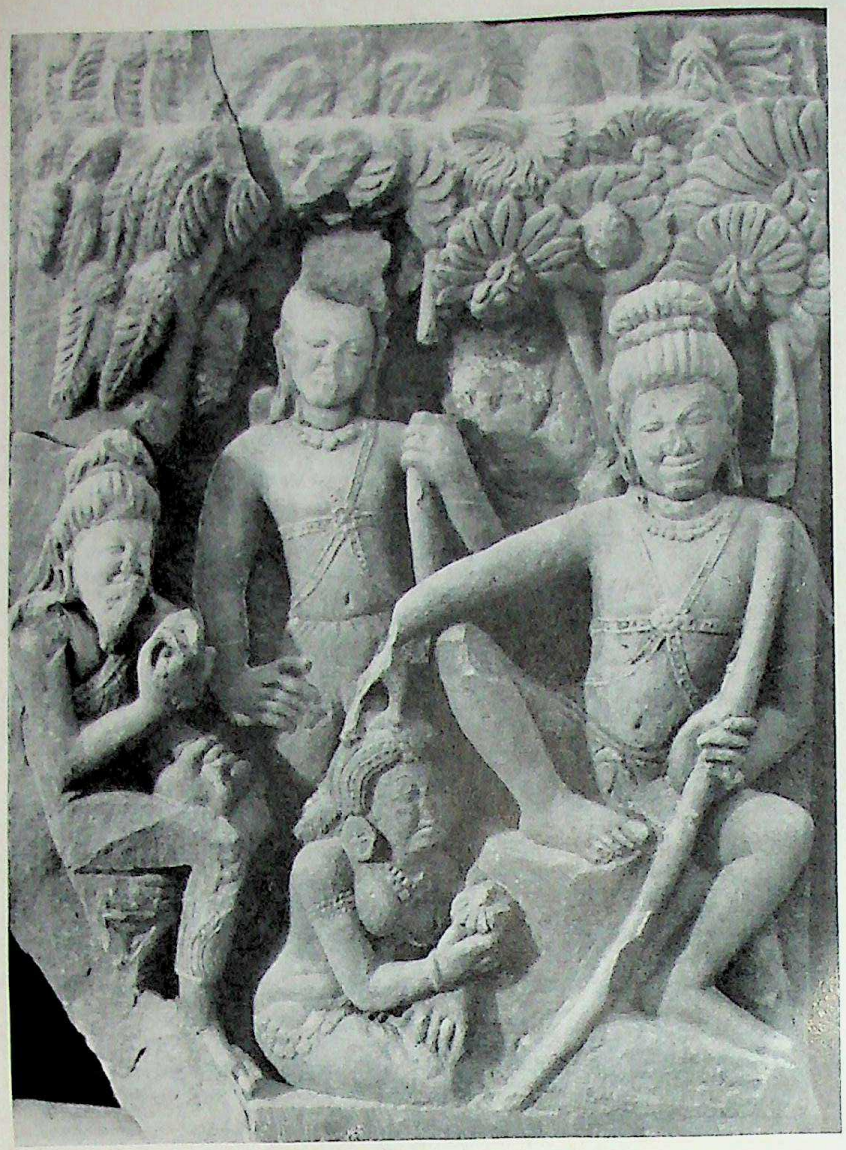

Fig. 80. Ahalyā-uddhāra, 5th C. A.D., Deogarh

Fig. 81. Mutilation of Śūrpaṇakhā, 5th C. A.D., Deogarh

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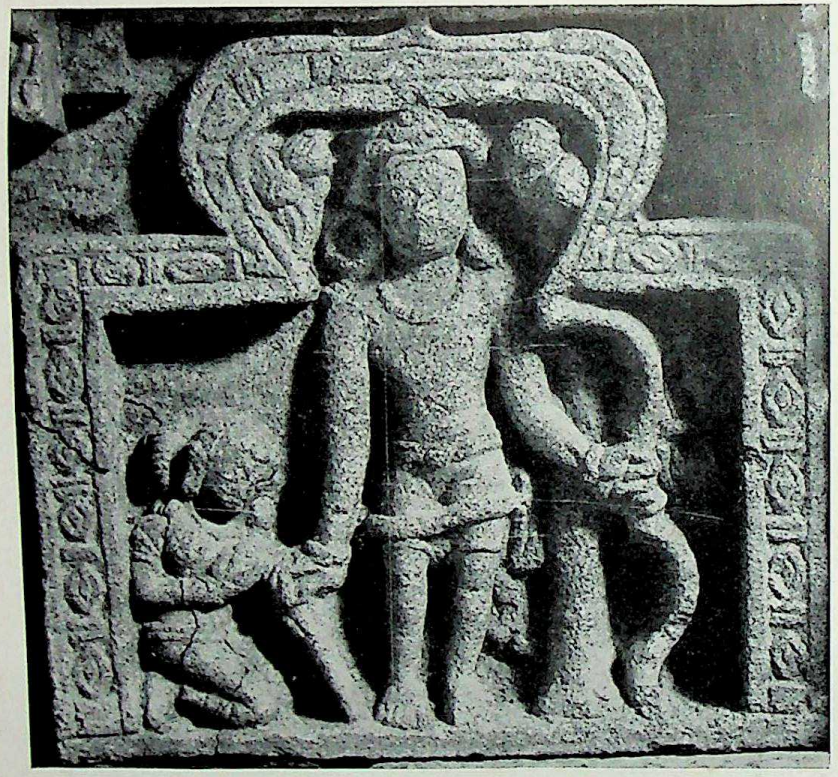

Fig. 82. Ahalyā-uddhāra, 7th-8th C. A.D., Nalanda

Fig. 83.
Search of Sītā, 5th C. A.D.,
Patna Museum

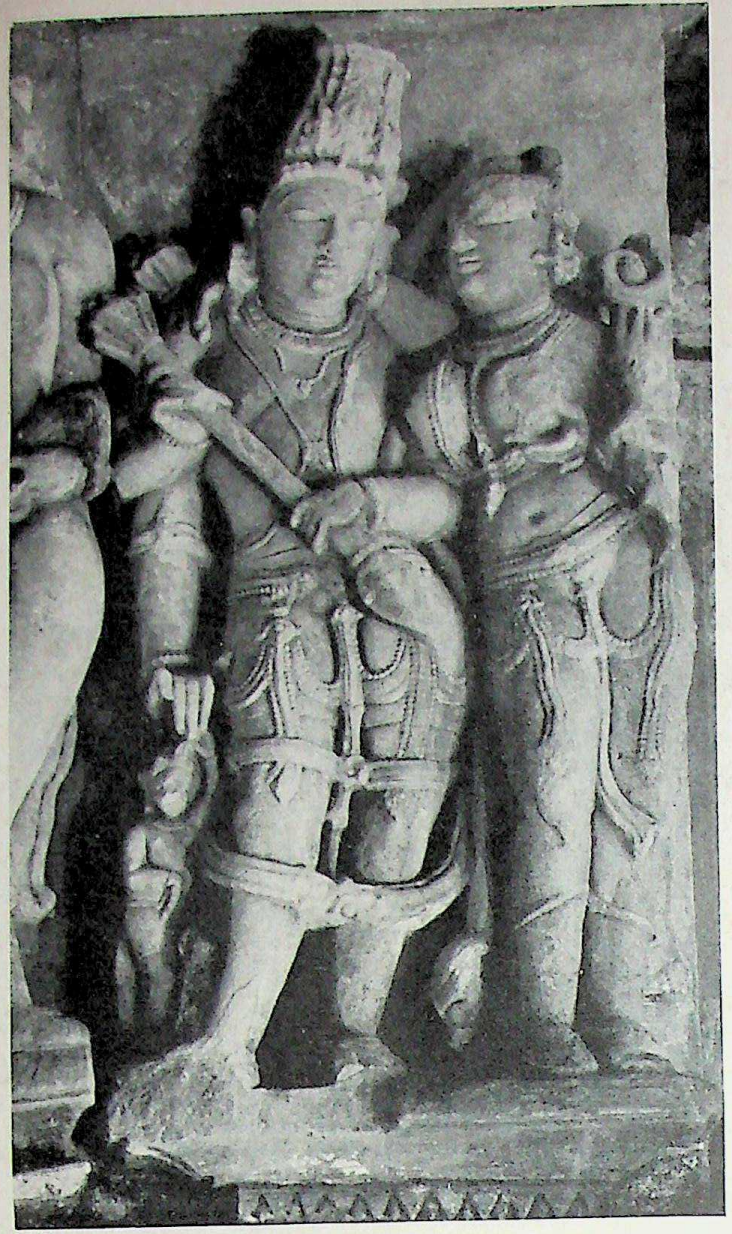

Fig. 84.
Rāma-Sītā, 11th C. A.D., Parsvanatha Temple,
Khajuraho

Fig. 85.
Rāma-Sītā, 11th C. A.D.,
Amba Mata Temple, Osian, Jodhpur

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Fig. 86.
Devakī handing over kṛṣṇa,
5th. A.D., Deogarh

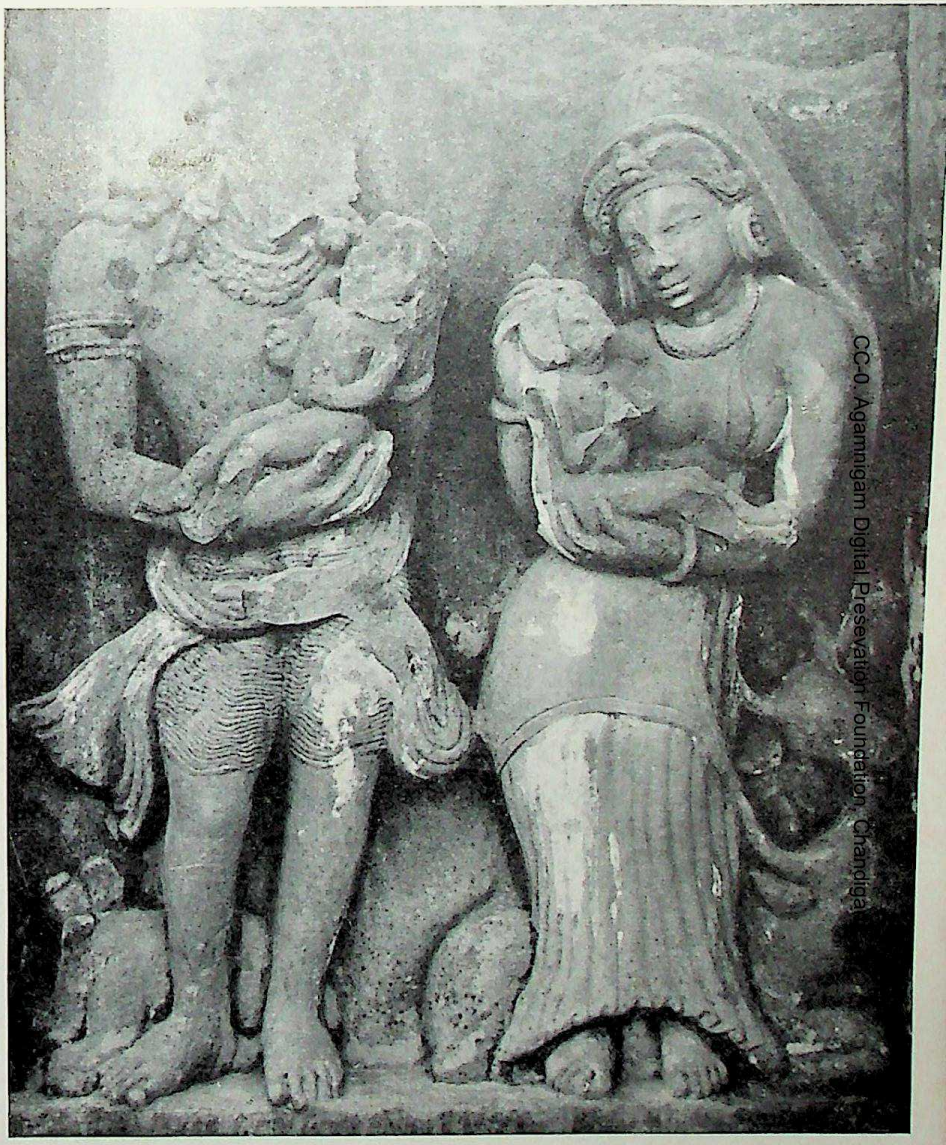

Fig. 87.
Family of Nanda, 5th C. A.D.,
Deogarh

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Fig. 88. Śakaṭabhañga, 5th C. A.D., Deogarh

Fig. 89.
Śakaṭabhañga, 10th C. A.D.,
Laksmana Temple, Khajuraho

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Figs. 90-91.
Scenes from
Kṛṣṇalīlā,
5th C. A.D.,
Mandor

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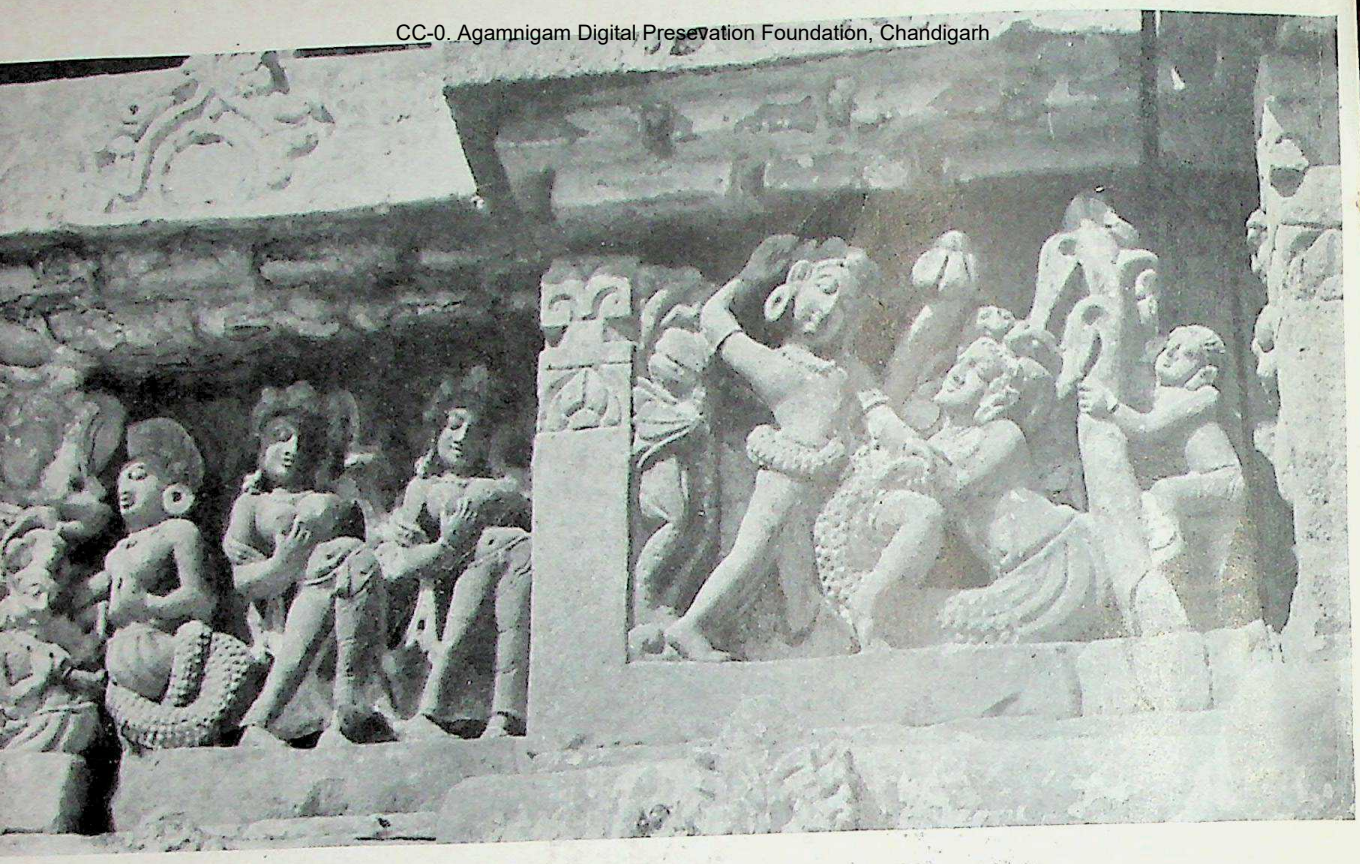

Fig. 92. Kāliyamardana, 9th C. A.D., Harihara Temple I, Osian, Jodhpur

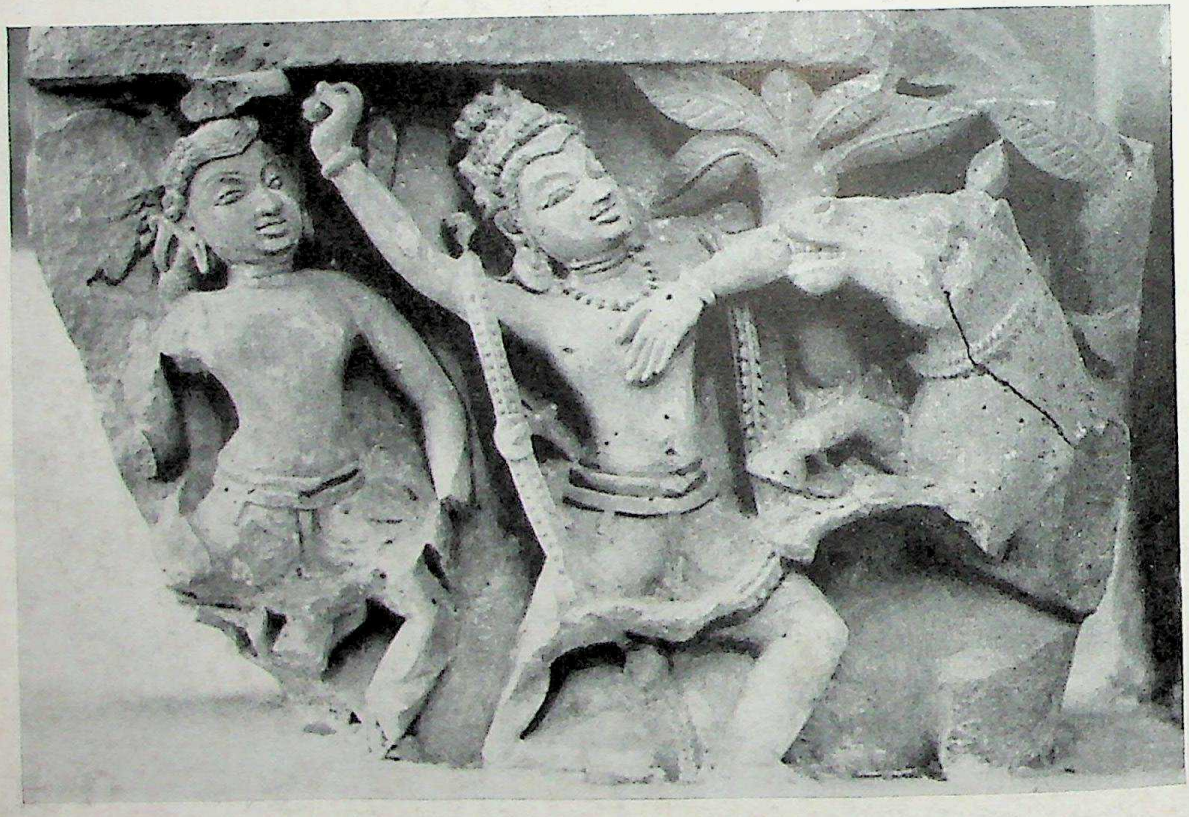

Fig. 93. Keśīvadha, 9th C. A.D., Abaneri, Amber Museum

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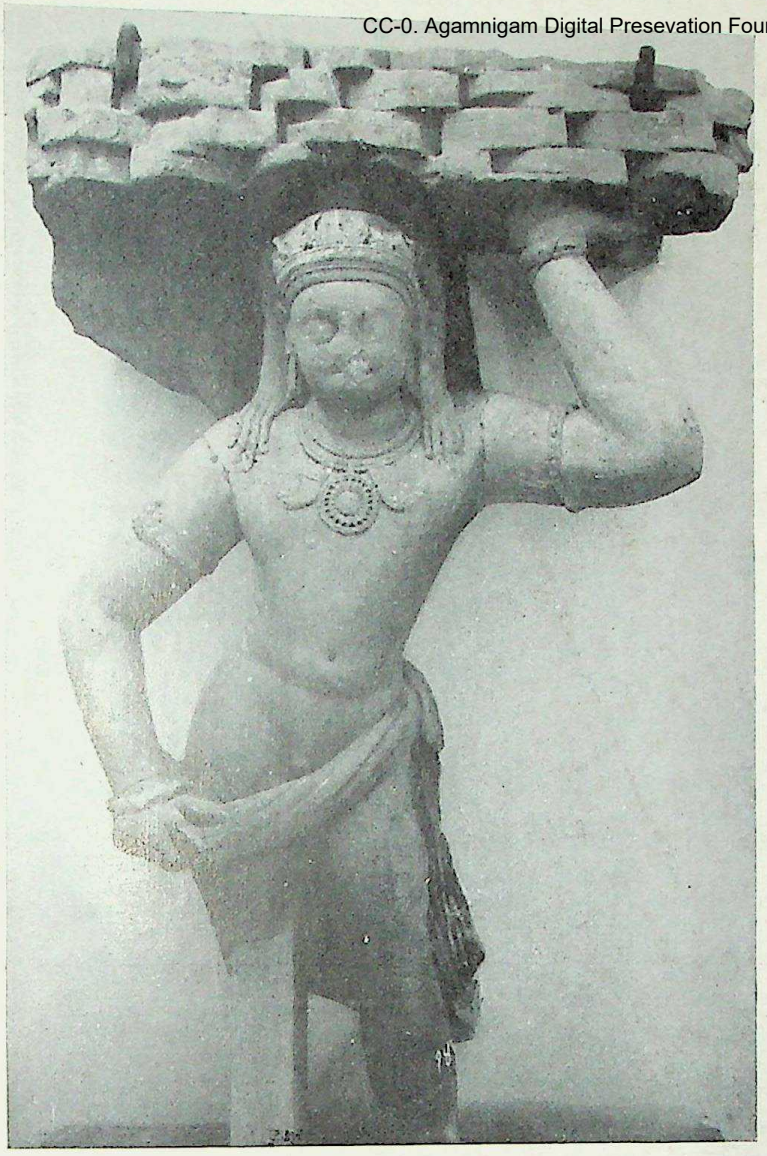

Fig. 94.
Govardhanadhārī, 5th C. A.D.,
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras

Fig. 95.
Kṛṣṇa witnessing the battle, 4th-
5th C. A.D., Lucknow Museum

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Fig. 96.
Kubjodhāra, 10th C. A.D.,
Laksmana Temple, Khajuraho

Fig. 97.
Pralambāsura
vadha,
5th C. A.D.,
Allahabad
Museum

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Fig. 98.
Balarāma from Mathura, 1st C. B.C.,
Lucknow Museum

Fig. 99.
Balarāma, 3rd C. A.D.,
Mathura Museum

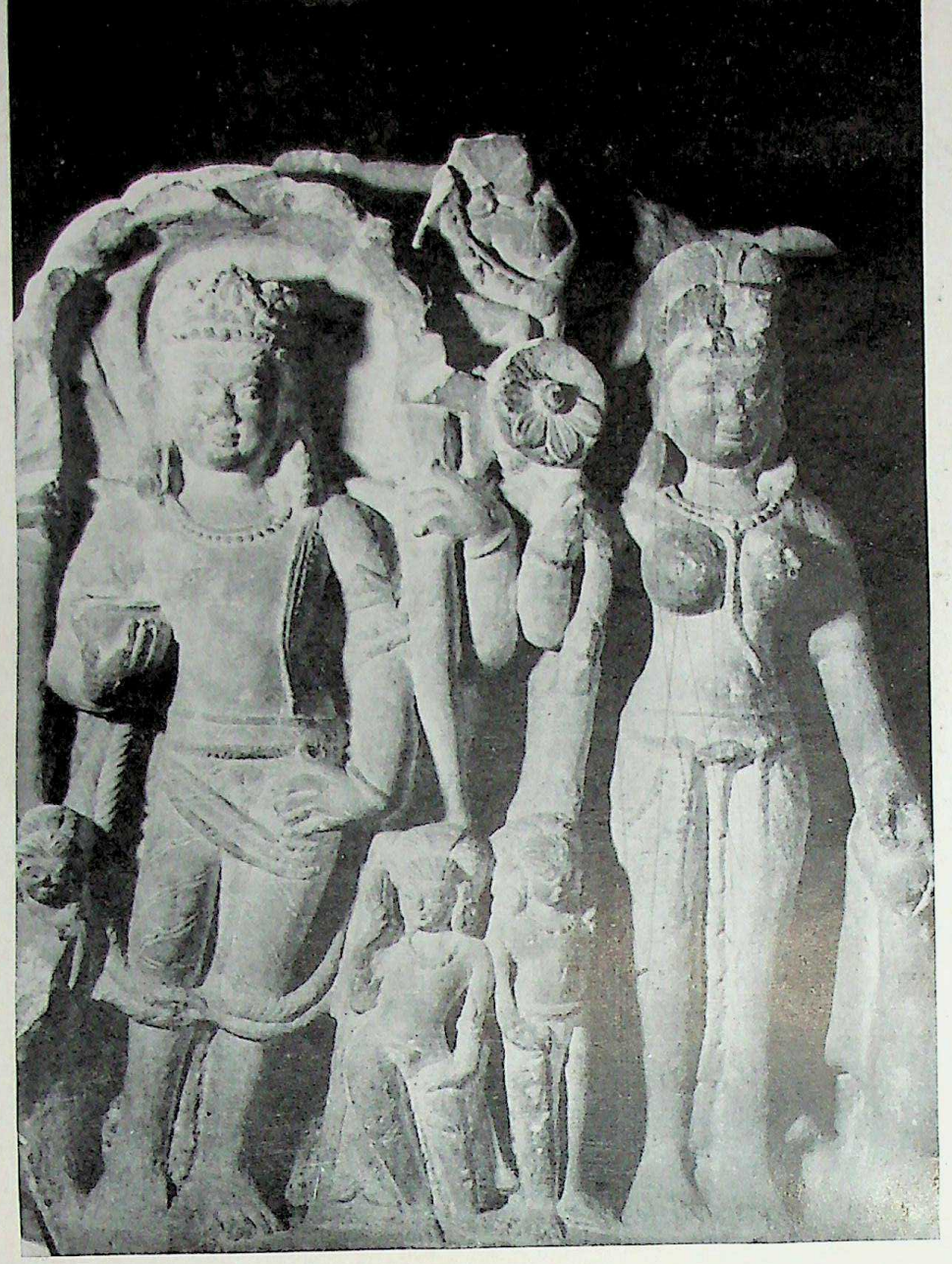

Fig. 100. Balarāma and Revatī (?), 7th-8th C. A.D., Ajmer Museum

Fig. 101. Balarāma and Revatī, 11th C. A.D., Parsvanatha Temple, Khajuraho

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Fig. 102. Kṛṣṇa Balarāma and Ekānaṁśā, 7th C. A.D., Lucknow Museum

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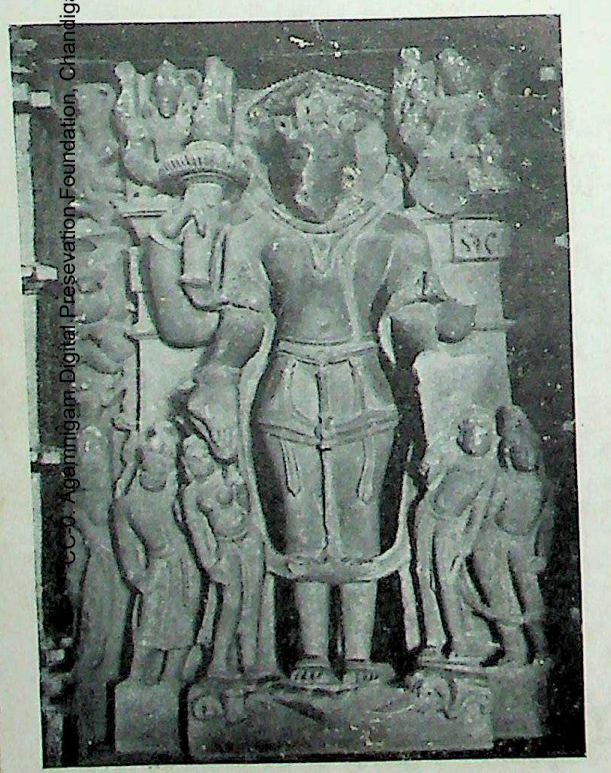

Fig. 103.
Hayagrīva, 11th C. A.D.,
Laksmana Temple, Khajuraho

Fig. 104.
Nara-Nārāyaṇa, 5th C. A.D.,
Deogarh

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